This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 07608178 9

CALLED TO THE FIELD

LUCY MEACHAM THRUSTON

Asmvat
NEW-YORK
LIBRARY
SOCIETY
1758

Called to the Field

Called to the Field

A Story of Virginia in the Civil War

BY

LUCY MEACHAM THRUSTON

Author of "Mistress Brent," "A Girl of Virginia," "Where the Tide Comes In," etc.

Boston
Little, Brown, and Company
1906

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
148231B
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1941 L

Copyright, 1906,
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

All rights reserved

Published March, 1906

THE PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW-YORK
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY LIBRARY

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

TO

AUGUSTA THRUSTON

PREFACE

AT the beginning of an omniverous reading the writer recalls striking upon a sentence which tersely and dramatically demanded why had not some woman told the woman's side of the war, meaning that of the first years of the sixties. Instantly there formed before her mind the tales to which she had often listened, the stories which followed upon the "Do-you-remembers" whispered by the fireside, and before which folk-lore and fairy tale had paled.

The writer who asked that question has since brilliantly depicted the adventurous, man's side of the question; another has lovingly and faithfully painted Virginia's share and burden: still for these and all others battle scene and soldiers' blood have formed the theme. These have never seemed to the writer the dominant note, — neither they nor loss of fortune nor blight of politics, — but the

days and months and years of the women left behind when the men were "Called to the Field."

Such this story — which is not a tragedy, only a love tale, with the laugh and the sigh which the master passion presses ever close together — depicts, and into it is woven the big woods, the "forest," loved and awe-inspiring, a drive out to which meant to the writer's childhood two or three miles along a sandy road, with the sparkle of the broad river behind one, a climb up steep clay hills to higher grounds, great hills covered to their heights with pine and chestnut and poplar, with patches of velvety moss at their feet; and, were it early summer, flushes of pink and white ivy (elsewhere called laurel) rolling between the brown rough trunks; or, earlier yet, in springtide, breadths of arbutus spread their bloom wide as a city square,—no scanty roots and handful of small blossoms with elusive perfume, but rich clusters of glowing pink or tinted white, with a luxury of odor floating up to one's face, mingled with the clean smell of brown leaves and pine-chaff, and resinous new tips and tassels upon the pines.

Sparkling streams ran between the hills and, as one splashed through them, vistas of green meadows and bending rushes and purple flags

opened; still steeper hills with gullies worn down their faces; and, at last, the top of the ridge, and "the forest." One could not yet tell why it should be so called, for cornfields and orchards and houses were on either side. But some few miles on, by the Dragon, the headwaters of the Piankatank, one came upon the bordering of the woods. Of these this tale is told.

LUCY MEACHAM THRUSTON.

CALLED TO THE FIELD

I

I TURNED my cheek upon the hollow of my arm, curved on the low window-sill. The sun was swinging, round and red, above the distant pines, and the golden light lay on the brown, fresh-ploughed fields beyond the yard and the white ribbon of the lane which led out, between fields and woods, to the wide country road a mile away. The scent of the upturned earth and of green grass, of budding leaves and newly opened violets was abroad. The cherry tree, huge and shadowing and ruling half the yard, lifted a white cloud of bloom into the soft spring air; the buzzing of the bees about the scented blossomings was a part of the rhythm of low winds and bending grasses and tossing branches. I drew a long, ecstatic breath. The spring-tide was in my heart as well as in the world. The cotton gown,

fresh and dainty, which I wore, was the blossoming in which I had clothed myself, as the cherry put on its white petals; and I was as dreamful as the day when I thought of Robert, of his pleasure at this gay dress with which I would astonish him when he came home. But how late he was!

I got up restlessly from the chair and wandered to the door. Daddy was coming from the fields, the plough rope hanging loosely about his neck, the share scraping along the road, and the tired mule plodding with drooping head. Through the back door of the hall, wide-open likewise, I could see Dick driving the cows into the milking-lot. It was very late, Robert must be coming; I would go and meet him.

I took down my sunbonnet; my knitted mitts hung beside it, but after a second's pause I put both back on the pegs and hurried out. The sun was too low to burn even a tender skin, and the touch of the wind on neck and cheek was a joy.

The rose-bush by the single low step was thick with odorous leaf-buds, jonquils shone

in their long leaves by the pathway, the dandelions were set like gold in the lush grass.

In the road I met Daddy. "Well, Daddy," I began, intending some trivial talk; but he cut me short.

"Lawd, Miss Lucy, what is you doin' 'dout yo' sunbonnet? fus' thing you know, you 'll be all freckled up same lak a tukky-aig."

Now this tender skin of mine was a sore point to me. Left to myself, bonnet and gloves would be forever discarded; but the whole household from Robert down, through Daddy and Mammy to Dick, was a household guard for beauty. I was never allowed to forget.

"What Marse Robert say now?" queried Daddy, as he rested his plough-point for a moment and jerked at the reins. "Whoa dyar! you 's in a pow'ful hurry! if you jes had showed a little o' dis disposition long 'bout fo' 'clock you 'd a' finished dat fiel'. What Marse Robert gwine say?" he repeated to me.

"Nothing," said I, shortly. "I don't need anything on my head; it 's near sunset now. I wonder what keeps Robert!"

"I dunno, chile, 't ain't nuthin' to worry 'bout. Ain't you gwine back now?"

"No; maybe I 'll meet him."

"Bettah not go beyon' de woods."

The restless mule was hurrying on to stable and his supper; Daddy followed perforce; I loitered on down the road. Every moment I thought I should see Robert riding out of the dusky woods and waving his hand gayly at sight of me. I went on and on with slow footsteps. I would not turn back now; the house was far behind me; the breadth of brown, ploughed land on either side grew less and less, and the gloom of the pines, the sound of their soft sighing was nearer and nearer. Here the ploughing ceased, and a strip of land, yellow with thin sedge and set with saplings, made a border land between field and forest. The saplings were tipped with the pink or green tassels of new growth, the resinous smell of them was strong in the air; before me the pines

loomed dark and sombre in the waning light. Should I venture on?

I stood listening, when I heard the blessed click and slam of the upper gate, and then the rhythmic sound of hoof-beats. I knew Lady's trot as I knew Robert's footsteps; in a moment they would be in sight, out of the forest.

I stood, laughter dimpling my face, and then in a flash crouched out of sight behind a well-rounded sapling by the roadside. Peering eagerly through the green needles, my eyes looked straight into two black, unwinking ones; a song-sparrow, flattened on her nest, kept anxious guard; I smiled into the tiny, frightened eyes, but whether I gave her courage I know not, for out of the woods rode Robert, and I swooped out and at him. Lady swerved, but he sat true, and when I looked for hearty laughter I won only a smile.

"Robert, you are so late!" I cried.

"Want a ride?" he called.

"Of course." The laughter came back to my lips.

"Jump up!" He stiffened his foot in the stirrup and leaned down. I reached for his hand and, touching his foot for a second, sprang up on the horse before him, where I cuddled close as Lady walked sedately homeward.

"Any letters?" I asked.

"One."

"Where is it?"

"In my coat pocket, just under your head; here, wait!"

"Oh! it 's from Emily." I tore open the envelope hastily. "What a long one!" as I saw the crossed and recrossed pages. "I shall have to read it after a while; and here is the song she promised me. We will sing it after supper. Take the letter, I can't read it now." I folded it up in some sort of fashion and thrust it back in Robert's pocket.

"Any news?" I asked, but he made me no answer.

Lady, carrying her double load, went slowly. The sun was out of sight behind us, but the mellow light flooded woods and

fields — and *home*. Leaning against Robert, looking toward it, I knew how dear it was, how dear *he* was.

"There 's a great freckle on your nose," said Robert irrelevantly.

"Nonsense!"

"It has come there since I left."

"The idea!"

Robert laughed as he leaned and kissed me between the eyes. Then he noticed my new gown. "Why, what is this?" he began, and I made indignant protest against his not observing it the instant we met. But the quarrel was not severe. When he lifted me from the horse at the gate, I refused to be dismissed and followed along the road which curved by the yard, past the garden, to the stables. My own fingers slipped Lady's bridle while Robert unfastened her saddle-girth, and in the corn-house I piled my arms with the yellow ears for her manger. I talked to her as I put them before her, her great eyes watching me as I moved about.

"Has she been led to water?" I asked.

"I let her drink at the swamp."

"Then good-night," I called to her gayly from the stable door. "Come on, Robert."

"Don't wait for me; I 'll be there soon."

"But supper is ready, I know."

"All right," he answered absent-mindedly, as I went singing along the way to the house. I saw Mammy watching from the kitchen door, and I saw Dick by her side waiting to bring in the supper. They turned away when I was near the yard gate, but I hastened, my lips pressed tightly upon the laughter bubbling within. Inside the gate I began to run; I was afraid I should be too late. I raced around the house, and stood closely pressed in the chimney corner by which Dick would come with his dishes. I heard the patter of his bare feet on the hard-beaten path. As I peeped out at him, he was eying the plate of biscuits in his hands; he shifted it to one hand, pounced on a brown biscuit, and, quick as a flash, shut his big mouth on it. I gave a hollow groan from my corner.

"Oh, Gawd! Gawd A'mighty!" his screech rang out all over the place.

CALLED TO THE FIELD

"You, Dick!" Mammy called from the kitchen, "what's de mattah 'long you?" Her heavy footsteps hurried toward us as Dick stood helpless and agape. "What! whar's dem biscuits? 'Fo' de Lawd!" as Dick pointed with shaking fingers to the empty plate and the bread scattered in the path. "Ise gwine lambaste you well. Ghos'! ghos'! I lay you 'll see wuss dan dat befo' I gits through wid you. What!" Mammy herself recoiled at sight of the huddled white figure at the chimney's side where I was doubled up almost crying with delight. "Miss Lucy!" she quavered, and then she comprehended.

"I jes promised dat boy a good whuppin'," she declared indignantly, "but I don't mean to totch him. 'T is yo' own fault, an' if you has to eat cohn-bread fer supper, you eats it."

I was sobered. "Mammy," I asked anxiously, "are n't there any more biscuits? Robert never will touch corn-bread."

"Dyar 's jes a few in de skillet, an' Marse Robert 's gwine hab dem sho."

"That's all right; Dick, come here!" He had stolen up behind Mammy, and stood hanging his head sheepishly and digging his bare toes into the earth. "You can eat them all." I gave him a comprehending glance, but if his black skin could have shown a blush it would not. His face was one huge grin.

"La, Miss Lucy," Mammy began.

"Give them every one to him; let him have enough for once."

Dick was instantly on all fours, gathering up the brown biscuits lovingly, and blowing the dust from them.

"Miss Lucy," began Mammy again, and then she must have concluded I was hopeless. "Ain't you nebbah gwine grow up?" she demanded as if in despair. "Hyar you's been married five months, an' I 'clare to goodness I don't see no change in you at all."

"Why should you?" I asked carelessly, as I skipped out of the corner and on the green grass. I whirled my stiff, billowy skirts, sank into a "cheese" courtesy, and bobbed up again. "Why should you?"

But the wrath had died out of Mammy's face. "Lawd bless you, chile," she said softly, "may you allus feel jes as happy as you looks now. De Lawd knows I hopes it."

II

WHEN I looked at Dick that night waiting solemnly on the supper table my mouth twitched; when he caught my eye, were he near Robert's chair, where he persisted in standing instead of in his proper place behind me, he grinned from ear to ear.

As for Robert he ate his supper in unwonted silence. Dick passed him the biscuits assiduously; he never once placed them in reach of my fingers, but what cared I? Batter-bread and broiled ham and omelet were enough for me. I ate a hearty meal and went with joyous heart and light step across the hall, into the chamber, where a small fire was kindled on the hearth.

I brought out the candle-stand flattened against the wall, straightened the top, buttoned it securely in place, and put the lighted candle upon it. From the closet I got an

armful of fleecy cotton and the carders, and sat down in my low chair by the hearth with the white drift at my feet. I was proud of my industry and vowed that on the morrow I would spin the cotton I was carding. The pine logs snapped cheerily; the light of them flickered and flamed on the bright andirons, the fender, the braided rug, and the floor scrubbed to shining whiteness. Robert, in his big arm-chair, smoked and watched the flames with absorbed, thoughtful face. I looked at him as I worked swiftly, chattering lightly while I did so of all the small happenings of the day. The drift of cotton grew at one side of me, the heap at the other was less and less; finally it was all done. I gathered it up in my arms and carried it to the spinning-wheel which stood in the hall and piled it carefully on the wheel's bench. As I went to and fro I hummed the tune of a song I had lately learned, and suddenly it reminded me of the letter I had quite forgotten.

"Oh, Robert!" I cried, "the words of 'Lorena' are in that letter; let's try it."

I picked up my flutina from the bureau and began playing the tune.

"Read me the words." But Robert handed them to me.

The first verse I already knew.

"The years creep slowly by, Lorena"—

I was in my flag chair before the fire, on the candle-stand was spread the sheet of foolscap with the fine trailing writing across it; my flutina was on my knee, and to its accompaniment I sang:—

"The years creep slowly by, Lorena,
The snow is on the grass again,
The sun's low down the sky, Lorena,
The frost gleams where the flowers have been;
But the heart throbs on as wildly now
As when the summer days were nigh;
Oh! the sun can never dip so low
Adown affection's cloudless sky."

"Why don't you sing, Robert?"

"I?" as if his thoughts were miles away, —"I, oh, I'm a little hoarse; sing on, I'm listening."

Robert's bass and Emily's alto and my soprano made a trio not to be despised. Many an hour we had spent in singing song

after song; I was a little put out that he showed so little enthusiasm over this one. I wanted to learn it at once, so that when Emily came for her long promised visit we might know this new tune also. So I sang on, entranced with my own melody, pausing now and then, with long-drawn notes upon the flutina, to read some indistinct writing beneath the candle-light.

The words were pathetic, the tune plaintive; perhaps my happy heart made the contrast bewitching. At any rate, I sang on through all the eight verses to the last:—

"It matters little now, Lorena,
The past is in the eternal past.
Our heads will soon lie low, Lorena,
Life's tide is ebbing out so fast.
There is a future, oh! thank God,
Of life this is so small a part;
'T is dust to dust beneath the sod,
But there, up there 't is heart to heart."

The sadness of the words seized me, and I could not have sung another note. I put the flutina back upon the bureau and stole out into the hall. A glance backward showed me Robert, slipped down in his

chair, his elbow on the wide arm of it, his chin resting on his hand; the other hand hung nervelessly, the fingers closed upon the reed stem of his smouldering pipe. Of what was he thinking so intently?

In the wide outer doorway I paused. Stars were thick in the sky, the air was scented with cherry blossoms, and from the distant swamp came the croaking of frogs.

The dear God alone knows what the world He made has always been to me. There is companionship in its voices, strength in its beauty, healing in its silences. I loitered down the pathway to the gate, and, with arms folded upon it, gazed out at the long stretch of fields, black in the starlight, toward the far-off blacker forest rimming them. I came back around the house. From the door of Mammy's cabin streamed a square of light, Mammy's uncouth figure swaying in the midst of it. I caught up my full skirts to keep them from sweeping the dew from the grass by the narrow path and ran down that way.

"La, Miss Lucy," was my greeting, "why don't you walk? whenebbah you starts, you goes lak a whirlwin'."

"What are you doing, Mammy?" I asked, ignoring her rebuke.

"Ise jes wroppin' up dese chickens fer de night. Dat ole yaller hen is a-hatchin', an' she's doin' it lak she does eberything eben to hatchin' her aigs, pow'ful slow an' scatterin' lak. Ise got to tek cyar o' dese till she gits de res' out."

"Oh, the beauties!" I cried, as I slipped down on the door-sill by Mammy's side. Why did n't you tell me they were out?"

"Hm! you had sumpin' else to think erbout, puttin' on yo' new frock an' prinkin' up fer Marse Robert. You's gwine ruin it now, chile, sho."

I turned the light skirt up over my knees. "No, indeed; give me the basket!"

"What's de use? dey's kivered up nice an' warm fer de night."

"Mammy," I answered impressively, "they are my very own chickens, the third brood that's been hatched out at my own home."

"Yo' own home! ain't yo' pa's home your'n? I'd like to know dat!"

Father's house was a stately one. I suspect the loving-hearted darky who had been transferred along with me, from that house to this, thought a home in the backwoods far too simple for her master's only child.

The thought lent asperity to my tone. "No, that's his; this is mine!"

"Hi-yi!" she chuckled, "guess Marse Robert say 't is his."

"What's his is mine." I reached an eager hand for the basket.

"Guess Marse Willum's is too," she declared jealously.

The controversy had gone far enough. I lifted the ragged and torn bits of quilt from the sleeping down-balls. "Eight! Two yellow ones, four speckled, one black — oh! look at this! as white — as white as snow." I took it in my hand and curved my other palm over it softly and lightly. The chick, with a murmuring "peep" of delight, lay close. "Oh, the dear!"

"Dyar! I nebbah did see nuthin' lak you

fer pettin' things in all my life. Put it away, an' de res' too. Ise gwine set de basket in a warm cornah by de hearth. Dick!"

The boy came out from the shadows of the room; I had not known he was there. In the light he showed a black face besmeared with crumbs. "You rascal," I cried, "come out here and dance. Come on!" I added as he stood grinning with indecision.

Dick, with apologetic air, squeezed between Mammy and the jamb of the door and stood before me, hitching up his trousers by the single gallister across his shoulders.

"Come!" I commanded as I leaned forward and began clapping my hands. "Step out there! Pshaw, dance lively now!"

Bending over and beating my palms in time, I began a rhythmic chant:—

"Ole black cat sittin' in de cornah;
Missis beat him wid de broom,
He jump on de mantel-piece,
Spill all de candle grease —
Walk in, sah, I 'll be your friend,
Long read to travel, not a picayune to spend."

Patter, patter, the bare feet danced in time, the lithe body swayed.

"What's Marse Robert doin'?" Mammy interrupted.

"'Sittin' in de cornah,'" I chanted saucily.

"Bettah go 'long talk to him stid o' sittin' hyar."

"I think so too; good-night, sleep tight."

From the path I called, "I want some biscuit for breakfast, Dick."

Robert sat just as I had left him. If he had moved, there was nothing to show it. "Don't you want to hear Emily's letter?" I asked for the sake of breaking the silence.

"Why, yes!" He roused himself as if from a long revery.

I picked up the envelope and looked at the superscription, "Mrs. Robert Aylett." The name was yet new enough to rouse a thrill whenever my eyes fell upon it, and I smiled as I opened the closely written sheets and began with the very date, April 5, 1861. There was little in it, and yet it was much to me. She told me how much she missed

me, — Emily had been my nearest neighbor at my father's home, — that my father looked lonely and the house deserted without me, which pleased my vanity mightily. Also, what I already knew, that father was in Richmond; and then such delightful nonsense as a sentence or two on the warm and early spring; that she hoped the weather would permit her wearing her new white dress to church the first Sunday in May. It was already made, had nine widths in the skirt, and was put to the bodice with a bias piping; she had had her leghorn bonnet retrimmed with white roses and blue ribbons and wide strings to tie under her chin; did I not think she would look sweet? Here were the words of the song she had promised me; and she was coming soon to pay me a visit; Robert and I must learn the verses so that we could sing them together when she came; and here the scribbling ended.

It was all charming to me; but when I finished and looked up for Robert's laughing praise, he had fallen into the same absorbed

quiet. "Why," I cried indignantly, "I don't believe you even heard it!"

"Oh, yes; I did."

"You can't tell me a word she said."

"She wrote that she had a new dress," he blundered.

"Robert!" I pushed his arm from the wide arm of the chair and perched myself there. "What is the matter?" As he was silent, I put my hand on his thick, curling, red hair and pushed his head back so that I could look into his brown eyes. They were solemn and serious and looked back at me with a gleam of questioning and of pity in their dark depths, and his clean-shaven lips were set and firm.

"Robert," I begged in affright, "what is it?"

He slipped his arm about me and pulled me to his knee. "Lucy, the news came to The Ordinary (our post-office) to-day. Virginia had seceded!"

"Seceded!" I thrilled for a second, but for a second only, with a dread of something awesome, I knew not what. It meant so

little to me then; whatever Virginia did was right, whatever she strove to do would be done, — it was the faith in which I had been bred, — and my head was against Robert's shoulder.

III

IF Robert were restless that night, I slept soundly; when I awakened, Dick was sitting on his heels before the hearth, watching the flames racing up the chimney. There was a chorus of bird-songs from the cherry tree, the prisoned fowls were crowing and cackling in the locked hen-house, and the cows were lowing in the milking-lot. I lay still, listening to the familiar sounds, my hand stolen where it could feel Robert's deep breathing as he slept.

"I done brought yo' watah," said Dick, as soon as he heard a stir from the bed.

I lifted a warning finger from the covers and he tiptoed away. I, too, tiptoed, as I stole about my toilet. Robert's sleep was too deep and peaceful to disturb, but I had to hurry if I were to see the sun rise above the pines behind the house.

The touch of the cold spring-water set me wide-awake and tingling to the finger tips.

I slipped into my numerous skirts and swung the glass between its round posts in the mahogany bureau so that I could see to brush my wilful hair, which, despite all its smoothings low about my ears and its close coiling at my neck, would crinkle and curl and show disorderly before the last pin was in it.

With uplifted hands I was twisting the heavy mass into primness, when I heard a stifled yawn and a sleepy "Lucy!"

I pretended I had heard no sound, but the dimples in my cheeks, which the looking-glass reflected for him as well as for me, and my lips a-quiver with suppressed merriment belied me; in a second I heard another and more decided "Lucy!"

My toilet was finished; I whirled in mock amazement. "Well, you are a lazy-bones!"

Robert smiled back at me. "Come here!" he commanded.

I walked over as if in slow reluctance. When he could reach me, he drew my head down to his breast, where I could feel his heart beat and held me so a second silently.

Then, "Gracious!" I cried, "you 'll get my hair all mussed up!" and I sprang away. "You are as lazy as can be," I accused from the doorway.

The hall doors were open, as they had been all night; the red sun came swinging up above the solemn pines; the wheat field, the pasture, and the fringe of growth about its gurgling streams showed tender green; the grass was heavy with sparkling dew. It was but the beginning of another such happy day as I had known months of — so I thought.

I was off with Robert to the barn as soon as breakfast was done; I rode Lady to water, Robert walking by my side; and when Robert had gone to work in the fresh-ploughed land, when he had started, hoe upon shoulder, to plant corn, I still lingered about the fringes of the field; it was such fun to hear Daddy protesting against Robert's city-bred ignorance. But their work took them further and further away, the soil was too heavy for even me to venture over, I had no top boots and too many skirts; so I left them reluctantly.

At least I could watch them. I pulled

my wheel out into the hall. The wind was so soft and light it scarcely rippled my thread as I started the cotton on the spindle and set the wheel a-humming. As I stood, and the whirling of the wheel made soft music, and the thread lengthened under my hands, I could see the bees buzzing about the cherry blossoms and hear a mocking-bird trilling, and an anxious hen clucking to her young brood. I looked out at yard and fields and the far-off figures wistfully, lazy loitering was so enticing; but that morning's spinning was the last I needed, to have thread enough to carry to Miss Nancy, our neighbor far back through the pines, who was the most skilful weaver in the county. Her help was rarely to be had, and by favor only; but she had promised that, if I would bring her thread of my own spinning, she would weave it into cloth, fine and smooth and even, as all her work must be, for Robert's shirts. When I should have cut them out, tucked and felled and fashioned them with my own stitches, how proud I would be! So I worked on.

CALLED TO THE FIELD

The sunlight streamed upon the low, broad sill of the door, came creeping along the hall, stole close to my feet; a pungent smell floated from the kitchen chimney, and I knew that Mammy had freshened the fire for cooking dinner, that pots were being swung across the wide hearth, and skillets were being put in readiness.

Two broaches of thread were wound upon the corn-cobs, and the third was growing rapidly; the wheel hummed faster and faster. My work was more and more absorbing, the fascination of the outside world grew less; my back had been turned to the lane, but stooping to pick up the broach which had rolled from my hand, I faced that way and saw a horseman riding down the road. He spied Robert in the field and pulled up to wait for him. It was Henry Latham, and I called to Mammy to warn her of a guest to dinner, but she did not hear. I pushed my wheel back against the wall, gathered up my cotton and thread, put them in the closet, and, shaking the soft, white, clinging stuff from my skirts, hurried out to the

kitchen. As I did so I saw the men coming slowly houseward, Henry riding sidewise so that he could face Robert, who walked with his hand upon the horse's mane. They were talking earnestly.

"Mr. Latham has come," I told Mammy at the kitchen door; "he is going to stay to dinner, I know. They are going around to the stable now. You had better get out some preserves, and that pound cake which has just been cut into."

We spent some time in housekeeping talk; still, when I went back to the house I thought the men were yet at the barn. My footsteps, light and quick, made little sound on the path, but before I put foot on the step I heard a low but distinct voice from the chamber. It was Henry's, and the words he said left me trembling in a heap on the door-sill.

"I tell you, Robert," — the voice was cruelly insistent, — "you must enlist."

"I cannot." The answer was short and curt.

Enlist! Robert enlist! How had Henry dared to name it?

"You must."

"Must?"

"Or be judged — you know how."

"I am afraid of no one's opinions."

"That is easy to say, but you can imagine what it would mean to live *here* and run counter to everything the people think right, and your wife — "

"God, man! don't you know it is for her sake that I am not going?"

"You mean you will go for her sake."

"I mean what I said."

"She could be left with her father."

"I shall take care of her in her own home."

"Pshaw! your theories are too fine-spun; they savor of — "

"What?" I had not dreamed there was any such tone of fierceness in Robert's voice.

"Ah, well! of cold-bloodedness, say."

"As you please."

This verged too close upon a quarrel. Henry was Robert's staunch friend; they must not be allowed to disagree, though, for a second, I hated Henry Latham with all my heart. I half rose to go in, when Robert's

voice sent me to my seat again. I had no thought of eaves-dropping, but this was too vital; I must hear.

What Robert had said was, "A man never knows how far back to go for his motives. You have heard of my father?"

Henry doubtless made some gesture of assent; his voice was not heard. For me, I bit my lip; I had heard of his father, and heard nothing to his credit. The very knowledge I had of Robert's childhood made me but love him more. Young and childish as I was, I felt some queer conviction that I must make up for mother and father, sister and brother, be sweetheart and wife — if ever there were a possibility of all these loves in one — to my lonely hearted husband; or, rather, that I must love him enough, make the atmosphere of affection about him strong enough, to make up for the early lack of it that he had known.

"You know," went on Robert, speaking very calmly and clearly, "that he spent all of his own fortune and my mother's too, when once they had moved to New York.

I knew nothing but luxury — until he died. My mother had died four years before. When I began to learn something of our affairs I found — well, I paid the debts, and I had not one thousand dollars left. I knew nothing really of New York. We lived there, mother and I, apart from it. When she died it was the same, so far as my keeping to myself was concerned. As for my father's friends — they were not the sort either she or I cared for."

In all the time I had known Robert I had not heard this much.

"I had some friends, — not intimate, you know, but friends, after a sort; boys I had known at school."

He paused as if he sought for words to tell the tale the better.

"When I began to face what I should do, I had but one thought, — home! That was what we always called it, mother and I, — what we called Virginia. In all her long illness she talked of it. She begged my father to bring her dead body back, to bury her, at least, under the old locust trees of — I

can't talk of it yet. She is buried in New York, a city cemetery. Some day I shall bring her here.

"When I came home, if state and soil can make a home, I bought this place cheap, because it is in the backwoods; the few hundreds I had left went to make a payment, to buy stock, and to furnish the house for a bachelor's home."

"You did n't stay a bachelor long." Henry spoke lightly, yet with a break in his voice, as men will do when they try to cover their emotions with commonplace speech.

"No; perhaps I was not wise —"

I sat bolt upright, the heat of indignation flushing me.

"Perhaps I was not wise, as fortunes go, but is it not wise — Man, I have known what it is to be *happy*, HAPPY. Do you know it?"

"No!"

Indeed; not happy? I should tell Emily, then —

I heard a chair push back and Robert's step as he moved about the room restlessly.

"Happy," he went on, "happy as I have never dreamed."

There was a long silence, but I had no intention of moving now. When Robert spoke again his voice was clear and distinct. "Perhaps you don't know that I am deeply in debt."

"You have married the daughter of a wealthy man?"

"And never touched a dollar of his money, nor will I; he would not so insult me."

"Some men would not call it that," Henry chuckled.

"He knows what I think," declared Robert, stoutly. "Last year the crops were good; still, the payment I could make was small, a little over the interest."

"Spent your money in getting married?"

"Spent it," said Robert, with a low laugh, "to buy Paradise."

How I loved him for it! I clenched my hands about my knees, hugging them and holding myself still. The desire was so

strong to run to him and kiss him for that speech — but there was Henry.

"If crops are good this year, and things promise well, so far, — the wheat is thick and flourishing, — with reasonable luck — "

But some sense of propriety had come to me at last. I got up and stole away with tender love and pity in my heart for Robert, but wrath for Henry. To dare to come and insist that Robert should enlist, and for what? I was too great a home body to know much of the country talk, but what I had heard, did it not belittle this trouble? There might be some battles fought, it was acknowledged, but few and soon ended; then let those who wished fight them.

I met Henry somewhat stiffly at the dinner table, but he was gracelessly at ease, and as blithe as if he had not come to my home with treachery in his heart; he was even barefaced enough to cloak his purpose with an invitation.

"The county militia is ordered to Richmond," he announced; "the ladies will give them a ball at the tavern. They sent a

message to The Ordinary this morning to pass the word; but I am a lazy fellow, I came only to tell you. Jack Martin has carried the news up the country."

"I do not care to go," I declared curtly.

"Why, Lucy!" Robert began.

But Henry went on. "The ladies are asked to furnish supper. If you would save this cake now, and if Maria has a ham, cooked as she knows how, and you would be so good as to spare some of your brandied peaches and pickles, they would be so glad."

I laughed at his assurance, but I was mollified, and answered with the eagerness of a young housekeeper anxious to give her best:

"I will pack them up in a basket and you can carry them."

"I am going on horseback."

"Oh, well!" I stammered in disappointment.

"Lucy, we can go, of course." Robert decided the matter.

Mammy was delighted to be called upon to cook for a festivity; perhaps I, too, was

pleased. Certainly it was a pleasure to pack the well-cooked ham and fluffy biscuits, still hot, the cake, preserves, and pickles into a hamper which just fitted into the box behind the buggy's seat; nor was it hard to don my green silk plaided with black lines, to fasten my low lace-collar with the cameo Robert gave me as a wedding gift, to tie the white strings of my bonnet beneath my chin, and to peep shyly at the wreath of tiny orange blossoms fastened where they touched the hair and so bespoke the bride, to drape my white crêpe shawl about my shoulders while Robert called impatiently from the buggy, waiting before the gate.

It was delightful to go spinning down the lane, while daylight still showed the way, behind Lady, who was in fine fettle; but not two miles from home my discomfiture began.

Henry met us where the road forked, and called out to us the news of a new regiment. We overtook Jack Martin, who turned in his seat to holloa, "I enlisted to-day."

"So did Sam Rowen," called Henry.

"And Lem Beatly and Joe Dudley." The names flew back and forth like shuttlecocks; I listened in dismay, while half of the young men of the neighborhood were mentioned.

Jack put his hand on his horse's back and turned to face us as he rattled off the list; and he and Henry called the news in wild enthusiasm, while Robert and I sat silent.

When the carriage from Oakleigh drove out, as we neared the Dragon, the young women in it were as enthusiastic as the men. The cavalcade grew. We crossed the bridge over the dark, swift stream of the Dragon, and the trees bordering it, or standing to their knees in the swirl of its waters, shut out the last lingering daylight. When we drove slowly up the heavy hill beyond, a pale star shone in the sky.

As we toiled through the heavy sand, Robert and I alone of all that gay crowd were quiet. He looked anxious and thoughtful when I stole a glance at him; and my heart grew colder and colder, and heavier and heavier within me. I was beginning to understand the meaning of the few words he

had said to me so solemnly the night before; but to understand them dimly.

From doors and windows the lights of the tavern flashed out into the dusk, and the huge sign fastened to the pole at the gateway creaked dismally to and fro in the evening wind as we drove in. The front yard was filled with carriages and horses; groups of men between them had drawn close together for eager talk; the steps were thronged; and beyond the clustering men we could see the flitting forms of white-gowned women. Robert had to drive around behind the house, and when he had lifted me from the buggy, I slipped into the side door. The wide and winding stairway came down into the central hall on which it opened; and descending it slowly, her hand on the rail, her full skirts rustling about her, her head tilted high, and her eager eyes scanning those whom she could watch in the outer hall, was Emily. I gave a cry of joy, and she ran down to me.

"How did you get here?" was my first question.

"Father had to come over yesterday, and I came along. I am at my aunt's. Oh, I am so glad I came with him!"

"I am, too," I chorused ecstatically. "Who is here?"

"Everybody!" Then a little curiously and slowly, "Who is here from around The Ordinary?"

"The Oakleigh carriage came along with us, and Jack Martin and Henry Latham," purposely putting this name last, and pinching her bare arm to emphasize it. She held herself rigid and unresponsive; and though I scarcely noticed it then, I remembered it afterwards. The clatter of dishes and hum of voices from the dining-room behind us reminded me of my hamper. "I must find some one to bring in my things."

"Oh, you should see the tables! Come on!"

"Not yet."

"And the dance! Such a dance as we are going to have! Ned is here with his fiddle, and — come here!"

She caught me by the arm and whirled me

away to a dusky corner beyond the dining-room door. "See! we are going to dance on it."

"What is it?" In the dark nothing was distinguishable.

"The old flag. They hauled it down from the court-house yesterday. We are going to fasten it down in the middle of the floor."

"You are not going to do that?" My voice quivered with indignation.

"Indeed we are!" She pirouetted gayly on her heel.

"Why, there's Bill!" as a negro lad came in the door. "Bill, go out to the buggy with Mrs. Aylett and bring in her basket. I am going to see the tables." And she danced away.

"There is the buggy," I told the darkey, "under the locust tree. I will be there directly. Go on!"

For a second the hall was empty. I caught up the folded flag, flung my shawl over it, and hurried after the boy. I was only another busy woman in that busy crowd.

"Here is the basket, in the buggy-box," I

commanded Bill, nervously. "You had better hurry. Don't set it down on the ground; the hounds will be in it. Take it in to Miss Emily." He was gone, and I lifted the box-lid, shook in my bundle of bunting, shut down the top firmly, and hurried after him.

Through hurry and bustle, through greetings and eager talk, through music and dancing, in spite of gay strains and graceful figures, and the soft beat of light feet, it was a miserable night. Miserable because of the look on Robert's face; miserable because of the pain at my heart. I would not dance; my feet felt like lead. Robert had come for me at first, and we had stood up opposite Emily and Jack Martin, — Emily looking as like a white butterfly hovering over scented blossoms as a girl on a dancing floor could seem; but after that Robert stood leaning against the wall by my side.

Reel followed reel; Ned never played such strains; the women seemed bewitched; but here and there was an anxious face. The supper was a triumph. Couples lingered on the stairway, in dark corners; but nowhere did

I see Emily and Henry together. I noticed and wondered even in my dull absorption.

Somewhere about midnight the crowd broke up, and we started homeward much in the same way as we had come, but more silently. There were songs from the Oakleigh carriage, in which the out-riders joined; but when they called for my soprano I felt that a note would choke me. I shrank close to Robert's side, and he slipped an arm about me in the dark.

We could scarce see the Dragon's ford at the first and shallower stream, nor the dusky road, nor the bridge over the full current beyond. A screech-owl somewhere in the dense budding woods set up his shivering cry, and, at the sound of wheels and splashings, flew further into the recesses, to send his wail again on the air.

The Oakleigh carriage turned off in the heavy shadows, the horses took the steep hill wearily; and when we came out in the starlight Jack Martin was riding slouched thoughtfully in his saddle, but Henry sat erect, gazing straight before him.

IV

OUR house was small, old, but yet unfinished. A wide hall ran through it, with a room on either side, — chamber and dining-room; a stairway, built in the wall led to two rooms beneath the sloping roof; kitchen and cabin were in the yard, — and that was all.

One of the attic rooms was finished and furnished for "spare-room;" in the other the floor was laid, the narrow window filled with glass, but the sloping rafters showed overhead. Some boards nailed lengthwise above the floor were the only finishings on the sides, and from rafter to rafter were excellent storage places, strange cupboards which one could lean over and rummage in; walnuts were yet left in one, bunches of garden seed in another, and, nearest the window, hanks of wool and bales of carpet-rags which I had pieced together in the winter. When

there was enough to make a carpet for the chamber floor Miss Nancy had promised the weaving of that also.

There, under wool and carpet-rags, I hid the flag; and there it lay forgotten. For a shadow had come between me and the sun; I saw the grayness of it on Robert's face.

The jonquils died from the path border, the violets under the window ran to seed, the cherry tree was studded with green fruit and glossy leaves, and the rose-bush by the door showed pink lines along its bursting buds; but before the cherries were ripe or the roses abloom the shadow had wrapped me about.

I followed Robert closely those last days. When he worked in the fields I lingered near-by, under a tree, at the borders of the wood, at some place where with hands folded idly in my lap I could watch him, see him when I lifted my eyelids, know that he was near. I watched, with eyes that grew weary of the strain, the shimmer of heat above the land, the cloud shadows drifting over it, flying birds and flocking crows — and Robert.

"You will be as good a farmer as I," he declared one day as we came houseward; "but that is bad enough. Do you know," he added with a poor attempt at laughter, "that it is really 'Zekiel who does the farming here? Any half-grown boy could help him as well as I." I held his hand close and felt the hour draw nearer. Far down in my soul, where things are divined, I knew, had known all along, that Robert was going to the war. I knew it from his tender manner to me, from the laughter which had died from his lips and from our lives, from the anxious look which had crept into his eyes and grew there.

"Your father stays a long time in Richmond," he said at another time.

"He may be at home for all we know; there will be a great deal to attend to when he first gets back, and he will not be able to leave right away."

An hour later I saw father ride out from the narrow opening in the pines. His horse came at full gallop despite the many miles already covered; his crutch, clasped under

his left arm, as he carried it when he rode, hung by the horse's flank; and his right hand held the reins. Though he rode at speed, the quick turn of his head from side to side told that his keen glance took notice of all to be seen; he was out of the saddle by the time I reached the gate.

"Well, Lucy, well, well!" as he hugged and kissed me and I clung to him. "Where is Robert? Where is 'Zekiel? How is everything getting on? Pretty well, I see. Where are Maria and that scamp, Dick? Who is going to take my horse?" He fitted his crutch under his arm and walked with the alertness of a boy up the pathway to the house, straight through the hall to the back door.

"Maria!" he called as Mammy's delighted face showed at the kitchen door, "come here! Have you been taking good care of Miss Lucy?" he questioned when she had waddled up to him, seized his hand, and shook it up and down.

"'Deed I is, Marse Willum; 'deed I is. Jes look at her."

"Hm!" said father, critically, "seems to me she is sort of puny."

"Lan', Marse Willum —" But then Mammy stopped. None of us had yet put our troubles into words; and if she had made any guesses Mammy was loyal enough not to name them.

"Where are your red cheeks, child?" he asked, pinching me slyly, "and your dimples? There!" as I began to smile, "don't lose them. I don't know but that Robert's heart was lost there. They are pitfalls, you know."

"Miss Lucy ain't laugh much dese days," ventured Mammy, carefully; "an' she don't eat much neidah."

"You don't say so! Whew! Well, I am hungry enough. Get the best supper the place affords. Where 's Dick? Tell him to take my horse to the stable, and bring some fresh water, and go and find Robert," he called from the chamber door; and having taken possession of us all he sat down in the easiest chair he could find and began to ask a hundred questions, listening to scarce a

score of answers. By the time Robert came in, my tongue was running glibly and my laugh was gay and light. So father kept us all the evening; once Robert led the talk to grave topics, but father shied off.

Even when supper was done and we sat in the hall, Robert with his flag chair tilted against the wall, I on the step, and father in his rocking-chair between us smoking the corn-cob pipe to which he had helped himself from Robert's store, he kept the talk to such topics as he chose.

With vivid words he pictured all he had seen. Though frogs called from the swamp and darkness blackened all beyond the fences of the yard, we walked in fancy the crowded streets of Richmond; we sat with sober-faced men in the capital; we shouldered gay women and uniformed men; we heard the shouts and saw the lights of that day and night when Virginia "went out."

I sat for the most part silent, dreading some sudden word which might bring the vital question of our hearts to light; they were not spoken. Only when father hobbled

to the door and shook the ashes from his pipe he asked carelessly, "Robert, what regiment have you joined?"

"None!" The answer came curt and sharp from the dark corner where he sat.

"No?" said father, lightly. "Well, good-night! Where is my candle, Lucy? Has Dick carried fresh water up to my room?" So, with pretence of fussiness, he smothered all chance of discussion, took everything as a matter of course, and wisely went his way.

It was the same in the morning. There was question after question about the farm, remark, criticism; Robert was trying a new venture, and father must hear all about it.

"Planting tobacco, are you? Where? Out in the far field? I am going to see it." He pushed back his chair from the breakfast table. "Are you ready?"

Robert gave me a look of amusement; we were used to starting our mornings more slowly, with a little longer lingering over our meal.

"Yes," he answered shortly.

"Come on, then. Where are you going,

Lucy?" For as Robert took down his hat from the peg I got my bonnet and mittens.

"Why, with you!" I declared in surprise. Of course I was going.

"Hm! pretty kind of housekeeping. Who washes your dishes?"

"Mammy."

"Your mother attended to hers herself." I had a dim fleeting vision of the big dining-room, a negro boy balancing upon his head a cedar noggin from which the steam slowly curled, and mother, slim and stately, awaiting him before a table where the china was neatly piled; of her loving touch on plate and cup; of her calm voice giving the orders for the day. I was no such housekeeper. I lived as I pleased, felt a fever for work one day and forgot all about it on the morrow.

We took the long path past the stables, across the wheat, now waving feathery stalks of fresh deep-green, down a bluff, clothed with sumach and sassafras and spicewood, over the sparkling stream which had carved its way through soft soil, and out to the far field. Every stage of the farming father

must review; the tobacco bed, how and where it had been planted; how the land had been prepared; what distance apart the plants were being set, until I was tired out, and so was he. In spite of his vigor the hobbling over furrows had exhausted him. He threw himself down to rest at the end of the row where 'Zekiel had stopped planting the day before. A tangle of bushes grew there and one tall tree; beyond it the land fell away to a lower level. Robert stood near us looking out thoughtfully over his work, and 'Zekiel, a basket of the gray-green tobacco-plants upon his arm, hurried toward us.

The morning was very still. It was yet early and the wind came only in long, fitful breaths, presaging the steady blow which by and by would toss the tree-tops; the red was scarcely out of the east, and the dense pines behind house and fields cast long shadows westward.

As father's eager speech ran short from exhaustion, stillness and silence wrapped us, fitful wind-breaths blew up across the lower

level, sumach and sassafras rustled softly about us, and overhead the oak tossed its new-born leaves of dainty brown and red. Suddenly in the silence, borne on a longer and stronger gust, broke a low, ominous sound, which died away, came again, was lost, and then came booming strong and clear. White and limp I leaned against the rough trunk of the oak. I could not have moved a muscle; all my senses were deadened, or, rather, gone to the strengthening of two — I listened with tense nerves to catch the faintest sound; I seemed to see at the same instant Robert's face and father's, though they were yards apart.

Both men had turned white as the linen of their shirts, but at Robert's neck the red which would flush his face already showed; I knew the token of strong excitement. The death-like stillness of the morning fell once more, and then, as the wind freshened, low and long came boom and reverberation. Father scrambled to his feet, fitted his crutch beneath his arm, and was off. "Come on!"

"What is it?" called Robert striding after him.

"What is it? what is it? They are attacking us, sir. I said so. I told them in Richmond. What is to stop them? With their gunboats at Old Point, what would be easier, what a better move, than for the Yankees to sail up the York, take West Point and hold it, to mass a force there for moving on Richmond? There is not a thing to stop it, not a fort, a gun, not a single damned preparation." Father had struck a pace which took all our energy to keep up with.

"It would scarcely be possible," Robert protested.

"And why not, sir? They have burned the shipping at Norfolk; this is the next move, and the right one too — for them. I warned our men, I spoke of it in Richmond. They would not listen to me, and now here, at the very first — "

He was scrambling across the ravine as he spoke, and he stopped to wave his crutch in emphasis.

"What will become of us, of this county? Why, man, we shall be their foraging ground." But he had come to the fence when he said this, and it took all father's breath to clamber over the rails. Robert helped me over gravely, and his hand tightened on my arm as my feet touched the ground; so together we reached the stables.

The horses were still in their stalls. "Bring them up to the house as soon as you can," was the order, and I lingered to give another: "Put my saddle on Lady, and bring her too."

I slipped my riding-skirt over my dress, while Robert looked to the loading of the gun which had stood night and day in the corner behind the bed; and when he and father came out I was already mounted.

"Where are you going?" Robert demanded, his brown eyes wide with astonishment, a sparkle of indignant vexation showing in them.

"I am not going to stay here."

"You must." He sprang into his saddle, slipped the heavy gun to his left arm.

"'Zekiel, take Lady to the stable," he commanded sternly.

I bent over the pommel. Robert had not noticed the mule tied to the fence, nor the pitchfork on 'Zekiel's shoulder. "No, sah," began 'Zekiel.

Robert wheeled his horse. "What in the name of thunder are you up to?"

"What is he up to? don't you see, sir?" father spluttered. "He is going with us. Let him alone. We need every man. We have got to repel the enemy, sir. What those blockheads in Richmond would not do, we have got to attend to." Father loosened the reins and his horse sprang forward. Robert was on one side of father, I on the other; so we rode down the lane, the three of us abreast, 'Zekiel behind, and Mammy screaming to us from the door. Out the gate and up the road we fled. We shouted the news to the first house we passed, and the men from it overtook us before we had gone a mile. Sped by paths shorter than the road the tidings flew, and from fork and lane and gate raced those whom regiment

and militia had not swept from us. Guns, good and old, bright and rusty, pitchforks, scythes, whatever weapons the soldiers had left behind, they carried.

"Such," father cried as he looked behind without slackening a whit of his speed, "such are the noblest soldiers of a country. When men rise in defence of home, woe to the invaders! whatever their weapons may be, guns, pitchforks, or — or crutches — " he looked down at his own with a whimsical bitterness — "they fight with those as none ever fought for other causes."

The day grew hot; the horses were lathered with foam and panting with thirst when we came to the cross-roads, the store, and the few houses of Plainview. The men threw themselves from their horses before the store, but I rode on to the pump and the brimming trough, and waited while Lady thrust her nozzle into the cool water.

Robert came up to me there and caught the loosened rein. He answered not a word to any indignant protests, but led Lady in at

the open gate of one of the village houses, and up to the porch.

A woman, white and aghast at the dreadful news we brought, stood in the doorway. "Mrs. Lawson," called Robert, "I have brought Lucy to stay with you. She was afraid to be left at home."

"I was not!" I cried hotly.

The woman paid no heed to me. "Mr. Aylett," she begged, as she wrung her hands, "what is the matter?"

Robert explained quickly. The men were remounting, forming in some sort of order in the wide road before the store.

"But we have heard nothing here, and we are so much nearer," she insisted.

I had heard the same thing said to father.

"The air, sir, — the way the wind blew," he had been quick to explain. "It reached us more plainly by chance; chance, sir."

Robert said something of the same sort, lifted me from the saddle, turned Lady loose, and was off.

Pounding hoof-beats, excited shoutings,

sunlight flashing from gun-barrels and scythe-blades, a cloud of dust — and silence.

A boy cried before the locked door of the store because his candy lay on the counter forgotten till it was too late; at gate and door women and children huddled in frightened groups; before the porch where I stood, shrilled a rooster.

The woman fairly cried, "Get along! Shut up!" she shooed. "There 's no telling what will happen without you calling 'strangers.'"

Noon passed — there was no thought of dinner; the evening slipped away; then in a cloud of dust, back came the cavalcade. Gun and pitchfork were at rest upon their shoulders, voices were no longer loud and excited; but there was no mistaking the earnest look of their faces.

"False alarm!" called one as they passed.

Such it had been. But it had done this: it had aroused the instinct of home defence in every man who had answered it; new regiments would be filled the faster on account of that day's fear.

The next morning found us under that oak in the far field, watching the tobacco-planting, discussing it, as if those twenty-four hours had never been.

We obeyed some instinct, possibly, of taking up affairs where they had been broken off.

But the morning was not still, the wind had been fresh all night and blew strongly across the lower levels. We had been but a minute on the spot when on its blowing came low, deep, insistent roll and reverberation which thrilled us to the heart.

"'Fore God!" swore father.

And again Robert's face went white with that streak of red across his jaw. 'Zekiel stood like a pointer scenting game, but I pushed my bonnet back from my ears and looked around me. Blackberry bushes trailed thick about us and beyond them the sumach waved its fronds; peering here and there I caught a glint of gray. I looked carefully and listened; that dreadful sound filled the air.

"They are there now, there is no mistaking that!" Father was scrambling to his

feet. "They must have been farther down the river yesterday, but now —" His crutch slipped from his hand in his haste, and I stooped to pick it up.

"Father," said I in a tone I strove to steady; "father, I have found your cannon."

"What in the devil —"

I waved his crutch dramatically. "Look!"

Robert strode close to us. Some instinct warned 'Zekiel; he seemed to shrink together, and a sheepish grin spread from ear to ear.

"Listen!"

With one swift stride through vine and bush Robert reached it. Hidden in the tangle of leaves, its mouth turned outward, lay a jug; the winds across the low levels blew straight into its mouth, and the mournful booming it made filled all the air.

With a scornful gesture Robert picked it up, smelled at it. "'Zekiel!" he shouted.

Daddy stood the picture of distressed foolishness.

"What in thunder —" Robert's face was fiery red and the veins on his temples swollen.

"'Fore Gawd, Marse Robert!" 'Zekiel stepped backward, his eyes fixed in terrified fascination on Robert's face. "'Fore Gawd, 't want nuthin' but cidah."

"Cider!"

"Cidah." 'Zekiel trampled the tender tobacco-plants underfoot, his face as ashy gray as their leaves. "Cidah, sah. I swear it was. 'Ria she knows how to keep it sweet, an' she sho do keep it good."

"Robert!" I called in an agony of fear, "Robert!" as he raised the jug in the air, but 'Zekiel sprang aside. Robert flung the jug into the field; he was too angry for a word.

"Cidah, sah," chattered 'Zekiel. "'T wan't nuthin' in de worl' but cidah; 'Ria knows how to fix it so it won't spile."

"We have made ourselves the laughing-stock of the country," Robert flamed.

"I think we have," father soberly assented.

"A jug, a jug of —"

"Cidah, sah; nice, sweet cidah. Ise been so po'ly lately; de rheumatiz wuks out in de spring, an' wid all dis 'baccer-plantin'! 'Ria

she want me to tek some o' dem teas she fixes up, but dey tas'e like pizin; dey tuhns my insides wrong side out, deed dey does. So I ups and says, 'I 'll take a little o' dat cidah out to de fiel', 'n —' "

"Get along to your work."

Father and Robert looked at each other, and with downcast heads and slow footsteps turned with one accord to the path. But I, behind the friendly screen of leaf and bush, lay with face pressed close to the grass, hands clasped beneath my mouth, stifling hysterical laughter. Here 'Zekiel came, and with friendly face and sympathetic grin looked down at me.

"Get up, Miss Lucy, you 're spi'lin yo' frock," he cautioned.

"Oh, Daddy!" I gasped as my laugh rang out.

But 'Zekiel's grin was still queer, though broad. He dug his foot into the hard earth and looked down at the marks he made.

"It was a funny thing," he mumbled, "it sho was. Jes a little cidah!"

V

IT was noon that day when father called me into the chamber. He and Robert had kept themselves entirely apart; they had lingered in the stable-yard, and loitered up the road to the house, and leaned against the palings by the gate, earnestly talking always. Whatever it was, they threshed it out between them, and called me at last to hear their decision. As usual father began at the very heart of the matter, speaking the gist of it first, and leaving the preliminaries to take care of themselves.

"Lucy," he called, before I had crossed the threshold of the room, "you know what I have always thought about holding slaves? You agree with me?"

"I always have," I answered proudly; and how could I have thought otherwise, seeing his strong will had trained me?

"So does Robert," shortly. "I have never changed — never. I was a member of the

legislature of eighteen-thirty, the youngest man there. I had always believed what I then declared, — the holding of men and women in bondage is a curse. Yet look at the history of it; it has been done from time immemorial to this. Nation after nation has abolished it; we are the last. Like many another great evil the people have awakened to its wickedness slowly and have purged themselves of it. The time had already come thirty years ago for freeing alike the negroes and ourselves. We would have done it, too, could we have agreed as to what would be the best way to do it; but to flood the country with such a people as they, turn them loose upon the community, — I tell you, sir, it is a problem a man quails before. Wise care and good government are the negro's only salvation. I see no chance of their working out these questions for themselves; no growth from within, but a necessary pruning from without. Well, we could n't accomplish it that year, though we lacked but three votes; and then — you know the hubbub since. Rascally politicians

have been using a question which should be decided with calm and earnest judgment as a veil to hide their own damned ends! — I beg your pardon, Lucy. If it had not been for them, in another year we would have succeeded. Randolph led that fight, and he would have carried it through. Lord, there is such a clang of tongues and smoke of breath when a thing has to be done, that, ten chances to one, a man forgets what he is after before he gets it. Well, you see what it has come to!" Father leaned against the mantelpiece as he talked, his thick, silver-gray hair rumpled until it stood straight upon his head, his blue eyes glowing; and he waved his crutch, as he always did when he could, for emphasis.

"But what I wanted to tell you was what I have done myself, gradually. A man has no right, sir, not to live up to his convictions, whether they are shared by those about him or not. When God has given him sense enough to do a thing, he is responsible for doing it. Well — I have made no fuss about it, but — Tom, you know, is free. I gave

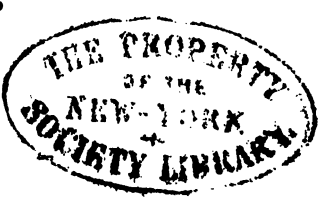
him five acres down on the creek ten years ago. He is a born fisherman and makes a good living out of the river; and all the land he wants is what will give him a garden patch. Then Frank I sold. That went against me: but John Rowan owns his wife and John is a good master. Frank wanted it to be done; I asked him. I gave Jim his freedom papers. He is a likely boy, and will get along anywhere as a house servant. No good any other way. He has gone up North." Father mentioned three or four others, and what had been done for them. "So there we are," he ended abruptly, looking down at the hearth and outlining with his crutch a brick upon it.

"Robert," he began as abruptly as he had ended, "I have often wondered if you did not think that I should have done something more — settled something on Lucy. You have not paid for your place yet?"

"No."

"Hm! I could easily have given it to Lucy as a wedding gift."

"You could not."



Father looked astounded.

"It was mine."

Father's clean-shaven lips pursed as if for a whistle.

"Well, well!" Then to me: "Robert is going to enlist to-day."

I leaned back against my chair speechless.

"He must; you know it. The money I have in the banks at Richmond — I intended it for you — I intended to leave you no burden of slaves; and so — are you willing that I should lend it to the Confederate government?"

Willing? God knows I was. Money? I did not even think of it. But my husband! I was no patriot, only a girl too shy to be at home even among the country folk, too home-loving to have spent a week elsewhere, too fond of field and wood to need companionship, too content ever to have wasted my heart on callow loves; a girl who, waking suddenly to a happy, absorbing passion, had no thought for anything beyond the orbit of her daily life.

"There is one thing I must do first. I

must pay off the debt on this farm. We will attend to it this day. Robert must leave that free."

They had settled it, of course, in those earnest conversations, and I had but to listen and heed. Robert's eyes were turned away; father stood oracular and happy, now that he was managing our affairs as well as his own.

"Well, it has come at last. I had hoped it would be sooner or not at all. There has been a war for every generation of our state, beginning with those who fought for our independence — eighteen-twelve, eighteen-forty — I was just married then:" his voice softened until his words were scarcely audible. "Even the Jews allowed a twelvemonth's freedom from the wars of their race, in which a man could stay at home and 'comfort' the woman he had wedded. What will you do about Lucy?" he asked suddenly.

"She will stay here."

"She must come home."

"No!" I made vigorous protest.

"It will be safest" Robert declared after one long breath.

"Have you ever thought," said father gently, "that I have missed my only child?"

I was shamed through and through. I turned my hot cheek against the chair.

"Leave 'Zekiel and Maria to take charge of the farming with the hands you have hired. They will do as well —" he caught himself abruptly.

"I make but a poor farmer," declared Robert, bitterly.

"There is the making of a good one in you, sir, — one of the best."

Their eyes met in a look it did me good to see. They had always been friends, but there was a holding back, half of wondering jealousy on father's side, a little of haughtiness on Robert's part, and it had stood between them. The stress of feeling burned it away; it disappeared under the necessity for plain speech.

"You have been a good friend to me, Mr. Yancey," said Robert, impulsively.

"I proved that when I gave you Lucy;

but perhaps I might have given something else at the same time," he added with a gleam of laughter in his blue eyes.

"You know—" began Robert, haughtily, but father interrupted him.

"Yes, I know more than you think;" father made a hesitant pause, as if he were wondering if he dared say what he wished.

"I do know," he repeated slowly. "I have envied you. I have left for you the joy of the struggle your courage and manhood demanded. It is God's blessing, successful work; you were free and unhampered; you could fight your own fight, make your own way. I was born a slave to duties—acres and negroes." He spoke in a half-serious, half-whimsical manner. "You had the untried path, and so—" He left his sentence to the wide possibilities speech could not frame. "Well, there's the buggy, and we had better be off."

They left me for their errand and I made ready for mine. The thread was all spun long ago, and if I were going home Miss

Nancy must have it soon. I packed a basket and, with Dick for company, started across the wheat field behind the house. The grain grew knee-high now and the ripple of it under the wind was like the waves of the wide river which ran before father's house. I fell to dreaming of it, and wondering how I should feel to be once more there; I recalled the old brick house, the paved paths, the thick mulberries, the shining beach, and the river with its sails flitting forever up and down. I knew that I loved it, from the tug at my heart; but I loved this, too.

The path narrowed to a foot-track covered with pine needles, and the pines roofed us in; they grew far apart at first and the wild honeysuckles flamed between their trunks, but, as our way wound deeper into the wood's fastnesses, the crowded trees shot up slender and rough and ragged; the ends of branches deadened by lack of sun and space interlocked impenetrably, too thick almost for the wild hogs, bred from runaways, and the deer to wander through. We saw no

flowers, heard no bird-songs, nothing but the crow's rough call far above us.

I felt suffocated. Only once before had I come this way, and in my blithe mood then the feeling born of the sombreness was sadness; now it was horror. I walked faster and faster. Dick trotting behind was brought to remonstrance.

"'Clar'! Miss Lucy, what is de use o' hurryin' so? you is fair runnin'; 'deed you bettah go slow, dyar's lots o' snakes down in dese woods dis time o' year, moc'sins an' black-snakes; an' black-snakes will fight in de spring time sho. Fus' thing you knows you 'll run right up on one. You bettah let me go fus', we 'se nigh de swamp — lan'! dyar's one now!"

"Let it alone!" I screamed.

"Ise got to kill him."

I fled back along the path. I heard the sound of a blow, another, and then a joyful shout; "Come 'long, Miss Lucy, he done kilt."

I came up slowly, shuddering, and angry from my fright. "What did you kill it for?" I demanded wrathfully.

"Hi! dat fellow was curled up all ready fer to spring — an' you was de fus'."

"Go on ahead if you want to."

Dick chuckled. The path dipped into the swampy land where the water oozed from the earth and stood in stagnant pools about the roots of the trees; we picked our way carefully; here a rail had been flung, and there a fallen branch had been pulled into place for bridging.

"We 'se nearly dyar," Dick comforted. "I hear de roostahs crowin'. I suttenly is glad."

"So am I," I acknowledged.

"Dey 's crowin' fer comp'ny," announced Dick, cheerfully, "an' hyar we is. Ef dem ole houn' dogs don't scent us now."

But the hounds were off on a hunt of their own, and we came out into the sight of the clearing unbayed; cabin and garden, orchard and narrow fields lay in the sunlight, grateful to the eye after the long gloom of the dense woods. Miss Nancy stood watching from her doorway of the double cabin, and Miss Molly — her sister — from the

other; both hastened out at sight of us, Miss Nancy hurrying primly, and yet with a certain precise grace, Miss Molly waddling behind her. They met us at the fence.

Miss Nancy welcomed us as graciously as any county dame. "La! now," called Miss Molly, "I said somebody was comin'."

"I am so glad to see you," repeated Miss Nancy. "It is such a beautiful day, and I have been hoping you would come soon, now that the warm weather has opened up. Walk right in!" She led the way up the box-bordered half of the yard to her own doorway; Miss Molly followed.

"Nancy always takes folks into her part of the house," her sister complained, but one glance toward her own littered domain must have silenced her; she followed meekly.

"Take your bonnet off. Sit down here." Miss Nancy drew a flag rocker before the worn but freshly reddened hearth, where the covered embers smouldered for further duty.

"Sister!" She ceremoniously handed her a chair, then sat down herself across the

hearth from me. Dick, with his basket courteously unnoticed, was left to sun himself on the broad doorstep.

"I said somebody was comin'," Miss Molly repeated. "The scissors fell out of my lap and struck straight up in the floor this morning, and next thing the red rooster walked right up on Sis Nancy's step and flopped his wings three times and crowed right out. I 've been watchin' ever since, just settin' in the sunshine and keepin' a lookout."

"Molly is always glad of an excuse to do nothing," said Miss Nancy.

"Well, it certainly did feel mighty good settin' there in the sunshine; and when I spied you comin' out of the woods I said, 'La, if there ain't Miss Lucy, bless my soul! and don't she look sweet?'"

I laughed. "You could n't see me for my sun-bonnet."

"But I could see your frock," Miss Molly assured me eagerly, delighted because she thought I was pleased with her flattery. "It certainly is pretty. Lands! did you have it when you was married?"

I scarcely listened to her, I was watching her sister. Twice only had I seen Miss Nancy before, though I had heard of her all my life. There were a hundred tales afloat of her oddity, but her dress was stranger than any of her deeds. A round scant skirt hung from a short puffed waist which ended below her bust; low-cut, short of sleeve, the bodice was, and that and skirt alike were white. Winter and summer, spring and fall, this style of costume never varied. Long knitted mittens and a yellowed shawl gave warmth in winter, but now she threw the shawl back on her chair when she sat down. Neck and arms were shrivelled like her face; her straight features, big dark eyes, and white hair, soft, abundant and worn high upon her head, were outlined against the loom which filled the corner of the room behind her; I caught my breath at the picture.

Miss Molly babbled on. "I just set the coffee-pot away with the grounds in it this morning. I said to myself, 'Whoever is comin' will want their fortune told,' and

there it is to hand. Mr. Rowan came himself last week to see if Sis Nancy could tell him who stole his shoats, and did n't she know as soon as she laid eyes on the cup?"

"I know the thief on his place," said Miss Nancy, curtly.

"And when Miss Mary with her sisters came up here from Oakleigh did n't she tell her right away she was goin' to be married before the year was out, and her husband would have blue eyes and brown hair, and they would live in a house with three chimneys?"

"Any goose could guess that she and John Dudley were dead in love with each other. How is Robert?" The question was abrupt, but as she asked it voice and expression softened wonderfully.

"He is well. He — he is going away."

Her eyes asked what I could not speak. I nodded. Suddenly I burst into a passion of tears.

"I cannot bear to think of it," I sobbed.

"Yes, you can; yes, you can." Her hand smoothing my head was infinitely loving.

"What shall I do?" I cried childishly.

"Ah!" Her tone was full of pity.

"It will kill me."

"No, it will not." Even then I noticed the bitterness of her voice.

"Suppose he should get shot!" I poured out all my horrors under the influence of that gentle touch. I had thought myself so brave. I had come with my presents and my work to be done, to say good-by quite grandly. Instead I sobbed out woes I had not before named even to myself.

"You must be brave; think of all the other women who have given up sons and husbands and — and lovers." But that touched me not a whit; other women were others, I was I.

"He wants to go?"

"Y-e-s!"

"Then you must let him see no fret nor worry, nor cowardice." Miss Nancy spoke the last word firmly.

"I am no coward," I cried.

"I know it." She left me and moved about softly, quickly. "Drink this," she commanded, as she pressed a glass into my

hand; "it is some of my elderberry wine. It is better than blackberry, I think, or even grape. Drink it all, child; it won't hurt you. Don't cry any more," as I handed back the empty glass. "You cry hard, child, and Robert must not see red eyes and swollen lids."

"He has gone away; he will not be back till night."

"By that time you will be all right. You must not let him see a shadow on your face. Send him away with a smile. There is so much sadness. Let his memory of you be bright. You brought me the thread?"

"Dick has it in the basket."

"I will look for him."

She left me for a moment. I knew it was done to give me time to stop that hysterical catching in my breath. I leaned forward, watching the ring of smoke curling slowly above the smouldering fire. I could hear the fowls clucking outside, and could hear, also, the swish and swirl of the Dragon's rapid flow; and when she came back, though I felt wretched, storm-swept, I was quiet.

Dick followed her and put down his basket

on the table under the narrow window. I folded back the towel from the top and showed its contents. "I have brought you some preserves and honey and pickles; we shall not need them."

"Bless your soul! but I shall. I told Sister Molly yesterday mine were nearly out. And it 's a long time yet before fruit will be ripe."

"I want you to enjoy them. You have been so good to me."

"You have brought me the thread?" quickly; my voice was quavering again.

"Oh, yes; it is in the basket."

"How smooth it is, and even, and fine!" She examined it critically. "I will begin to weave it at once."

"There is no hurry," I said faintly.

"We 'll have it ready, anyhow."

"It is so hard," I began again.

Miss Nancy brought me up shortly. She was lifting the jars to the few shelves of her cupboard; Dick stood by the hearth. "Hard!" she cried, as she sat down the last one and whirled to face me. "Hard! Sup-

pose you had never had him? Suppose he had loved somebody else? Suppose he had loved you and you had known it, and yet he had to marry some one else?"

"It is impossible."

"Ah, well! it is — for you." She closed the door slowly and went, her back turned to me, toward the loom.

"Have you seen the counterpane I am weaving? it is nearly done. I will take it out and put in your linen."

The high narrow bench on which her slender, alert figure perched through many an hour was pushed far back to the end, and on it, the shuttle in her fingers, her body swaying, — as I had once seen her, — she seemed some weird spirit, something superhuman, who held alike in her withered but active hands both music and fate. I leaned against the heavy post watching her, as her loving touch on the threads bespoke the absorbing interest it held. She spoke of dye and coloring, of plaid and stripe.

"Sister!" Miss Molly called. "La, you are always at that loom! If you are not

working in it, you are looking at it. Here 's the coffee-pot. Come along, tell Miss Lucy's fortune."

"It is already told." Miss Nancy was a trifle curt.

"Em — em! as if people never had anything happen to 'em after they were once good and married. Come on. Here, child!" Miss Molly beckoned me mysteriously. "You just get down that china cup off the shelf your own self, pour this in, there! So! and give it a good whirl around three times — that 's it! Throw the coffee on the fire, it won't hurt anything, and turn the cup upside down in the saucer. Set it here and just leave it till the grounds get hard and dry."

I did as she told me explicitly, Miss Nancy watching me from a corner of the hearth, her face set, her dark eyes sombre. I put out an impatient hand cupward. My mood had swung back from its blackness, and I was thoroughly in humor with the jest.

"Stop!" Miss Nancy cried; "the drops would run back in the cup; that would mean tears."

"It's perfectly wonderful," whispered her sister. "There's no telling what she will promise you."

"I shall believe every word she says."

"Pshaw! I know nothing about it." Miss Nancy spoke impatiently.

"You look the fortune-teller to perfection. No one could doubt you."

Miss Nancy frowned. "Hand the cup here," she said in a voice of resignation. "You must pick it up yourself."

She turned the pretty blue china reluctantly; but the instant she did so her face changed: an intent, peering look stole into her eyes, a flush crept upon her cheek. "I see," she began in low and sing-song tone, "a girl and a man. The girl — she is neither large nor tall —"

"That's me," I interrupted gleefully.

"And the man, he is large, broad-shouldered —"

"Robert!"

"There is a stream here, a path, a house with two chimneys."

I smiled; it was well done.

"Another house, big, four chimneys. There is a journey before you, not long, but—" She moved a step on the uneven hearth, turned the cup as if for better sight, her fingers fumbled; the cup fell and broke into a dozen pieces on the bricks.

"Sister! Sister! Your best china cup!" Miss Molly screamed. But Miss Nancy seemed in no wise dismayed. "Accidents will happen," she said sententiously, while I promised her one of mine.

"It will not be so pretty," I declared, "but you can have it to remember me by."

"I do not need that," said Miss Nancy as she helped me with bonnet and gloves.

They followed us to the fence where they had welcomed us, and when I looked back Miss Nancy gazed straight toward me. The shawl had fallen from her bare shoulders, one arm lay on the chestnut rail, the wind blew her scant skirts about her ankles; she held her head high and in her eyes was a look I could not fathom. It was that of the seer.

VI

MAMMY stood in the kitchen door when Dick and I came up across the yard. Usually she was full of curiosity, and questioned every one, even me. Now she stood leaning against the doorway with lips pursed out, wrinkled forehead, and arms akimbo; and she was silent.

"I am going to pack my trunk," I called to her. "I want you to help me."

"Name o' Gawd!" she mumbled, "you talk lak you 's gwine stay a year."

"Well!" I attempted a laugh. "I 'll need all my dresses."

"Miss Lucy, what you talkin' 'bout, all de clo'es you 's got? What is you gwine do wid all dem things? does you 'spec' to stay forebbah?" as I went from bureau drawer to closet.

I pretended much amusement, but our hurried footsteps seemed out of tune with

the quiet of the house, that was flooded with the sunshine of afternoon, with the long shadows the gate made across the pathway, and the cherry tree stretched along the grass. The dragging of my brass-studded trunk into the hall, even the turning of the key in the lock, rasped my nerves; but I bore myself gayly.

"You must just play that I have gone on a visit, and you must take care of everything and keep it exactly as it was when I was here, house and all. Don't you go to shutting up the windows and locking the doors; I could n't bear the thought of it." I talked in snatches as I made a fresh toilet, from a bath in soft spring-water to a dainty summer gown. "You are to keep everything just as I leave it," I repeated. "Who knows when I may come back? You are not to cry when I go away." And as I had intended to seem frivolous, as she always thought me, I shook her fat shoulders as I laid my hands upon them, and put my head on one side to watch the fall of lace from my rounded arms; and I vowed there was not a freckle upon them.

"No tears now," with another little shake, for the whites of Mammy's eyes were suspiciously red and bloodshot. "Everything will soon be all right, and then 'We 're *coming* home, no more to roam,' I sang, 'We 're *coming* home to-morrow.'"

I finished dressing, took a leisurely survey of myself, from parted hair and white forehead, from long lashes and blue eyes and round cheeks to the line of my low collar — all the small mirror would show.

"You are to get the very best supper you can cook," I commanded; "father is not coming back, but Robert will be tired and hungry."

"Po' lamb!" I heard her mutter under her breath; but I was still singing when I went out of the house.

The roses by the door were nearly abloom, so nearly that there was a fragrance in their buds; I pulled down a low branch of the cherry tree, but the fruit was white and waxen, showing no mellow tint of red upon its cheeks; I opened the garden gate and strolled down the flower-bordered path.

The earth beneath the lilacs was purple with drifted petals, the syringa was studded with white, folded buds, the bridal wreath thrust out an arm of bloom; and, in the squares they bordered, the peas unfolded butterfly blossoms, the radishes showed sturdy leaves, and the new-set plants wilted while they struck fresh root in brown furrows. Down at the very end of the garden grew the strawberries; I had watched their blossoming and then forgotten them. Would they be ripe now? I pulled aside the pine boughs eagerly; the red globes shone everywhere.

They were the crowning touch to our feast, and when I stood by the table gloating over them, I heard a horseman riding rapidly down the lane and ran out to meet Robert. How straight he sat! how easy was Lady's lope! A new light, brave and bright and strong, shone on his face; but his eyes were anxious as they met mine, then they brightened wonderfully.

He slipped from his horse. "Sweetheart!" he murmured as put his arm

about me; and though Robert was tenderly affectionate it was rarely that such terms crossed his lips. I knew it was relief as well as love which spoke, that he had feared to find me bewailing, tear-stained; but I slipped my hand in his, and we went along to the stable, Lady following sedately.

He told me gayly that he had enlisted, that he was to join the force then fortifying Gloucester Point, and, with the fort at Yorktown, defending the river which afforded a partial route to Richmond; that the farm had been paid for and the deed recorded; and he spoke of a horse he wished to buy.

"For what?" I asked quickly.

"Why, you know I have joined the cavalry."

"You will ride Lady."

"She is your horse."

"And yours. Do you think I would trust any other horse to carry you should you be ordered from the fort," I added passionately; and somehow we could not find another word to say.

At the gate Robert put his hand on mine

as I started to lift the latch. "When could we go?" he asked in a low voice.

"To-morrow," I answered, lightly.

"To-morrow?" astounded.

"I am all ready. We can start early in the morning. Come, see!" I pointed with dramatic gesture to trunk and box piled within the hall, and though Robert had the grace not to say it, his face showed that he was glad.

We were as gay about the supper table as we had ever been; we ate heartily; we loitered in the wide hall and watched the sun set beyond the pines, and the dusk veil road and fields. I got my flutina, sat down on the doorstep, and played reel and jig and every gay tune I knew; and when Robert finished smoking I played "Lorena." His rich notes floated out with mine as the plaintive story was sung, and my voice quavered never over a single note, though Robert's broke once at the last:—

"There is a future, oh, thank God.
'T is dust to dust beneath the sod,
But there, up there, 't is heart to heart."

I slipped into a gay hunter's chorus in a flash, sang "Kitty Clyde" saucily, and followed it with every air I knew. When I laid the flutina down, I heard a sigh behind me; I turned my head. There on the back step sat 'Zekiel and Maria and Dick.

There was nothing wrong with the world next day, nor with us, so far as eye could see. We were clad in our best, but then we were going a-visiting; we ate little breakfast, but we were hurried. Lady, hitched to the buggy, was tied outside of the yard railing, and the ox-cart waited behind her.

I carefully pulled out the bonnet's bow beneath my chin, picked up my gloves and my small fringed parasol. I would make no tour of the house, say no last words, think no last thoughts, though every step upon the bare floor beat "Last, the last, it is the last!"

I called a gay good-by to Mammy's anxious figure at the gate, while Robert tucked the linen robe about my skirts; I straightened my bonnet where Mammy had tilted it when

she caught me fast in a swaying embrace as I came out; I looked and laughed as we turned, but I would not look backwards. I saw the fields, green with the upspringing shoots of corn, slip by as Lady trotted down the lane; I saw the woods come nearer, nearer, the fields grow less until only the sedge was left; I saw the pines overhead. By and by the clang of the gate told me that we were outside, and the county road stretched before us. I did not see it; but my bonnet's brim was wide, it hid my weakness.

VII

IT cut me to the heart to see father's delight at having me again at home. Happiness, sudden and complete, often breeds selfishness. I had been too absorbed in self to think that any suffered thereby, and no straying fancy had ever pictured for me the rooms, with their look of disuse, and the deserted hall of my father's house. Again within them, I was vaguely conscious of their tale of emptiness, as if the life of the home had shrunken too small for the enveloping shell, — a feeling which did not wear away,— for it was not my life those walls then held, it was my existence.

Father, with his eager interest prompting him, took me from cabin to cabin, showed the calves he had petted till they followed him like dogs, the colts he had broken or was going to break, bragging of the pedigree of this one or the speed of the other, his

own enthusiasm vivifying every subject that he touched upon, and so enrapturing himself that he did not perceive its lack in others.

I did my poor best to share his interests, but some part of me was deadened, gone to the quickening of others. The plantation with all its affairs held for me not a fraction of the fascination the river kept. That way lay the fort; that way was Robert. Along its shining stretches he must come. I watched it, but never for its beauties; light and shade upon it, mist and sunshine, sunrise and sunset — all were unheeded in that searching for a sail.

Many a morning, when the birds sang in the mulberries outside the dormer window by my bedside, I pulled my pillow over to the wide sill, propped my chin upon it, and, watching the sunrise, — the golden pathway, the beaten silver of the waves, — wondered if fortune would bring Robert that day along its highway.

Many a noon, when the river ran still and smooth like molten glass beneath the shim-

mer of heat dancing above it, when the shadows of the mulberries were close about their trunks, and the roll of the tide was languid along the shore, I watched the idle sails in sight, wondering if fitful winds and cruel calms debarred me of any moment which might be passed with him.

Or at sunset, when all the river was crimsoned, when the boats were hurrying home, I longed to see some sail stretched toward us. No music could be so sweet as the rattling of the ropes about the mast when the sail which brought him was slipped to idleness, no picture so entrancing as one straight figure standing above it laughing at my delight.

Furloughs were easily to be had — then. The life of the soldiers at the fort had touches of prolonged picnicking. The ladies visited them, feasted them; the lightest of cakes, the clearest of jellies, the tenderest poultry found their way to that bastion by which the inner gate was guarded. But I would never go. Emily was away. I saw little of the other neighbors, and I was half

jealous of the tales I heard. I toasted my hero when he came, but I sought him never.

My own small row-boat lay at the wharf, and I was out in it sometimes, but not often; I was too restless to settle to any one thing day by day. Late one afternoon I floated in it idly over the shallows before the house, watching the banners of the seaweeds streaming with the tide, the darting crabs, the pulsing jelly-fish — and a sail. It came around the headland like a wide-winged bird skimming close above the river's breast; the wind was fair for the course it took, and the bellying sail and gleaming prow sped straight up the mighty current till abreast of me, then rounded and beat down toward my little boat. My idle oars flashed; it seemed but a moment before I was alongside, was grasping Robert's hands, and, springing over the canoe's side, was seated by him in the stern and laughing at Henry's teasing; for Henry was with him and sat indolently on the canoe's careening side, the sail-rope in his hand.

"Why have n't you been to see us?" I

demanded, attacking him in return for his jesting.

He made a polite but careless answer.

"I should think you would be glad enough to get away from the camp now and then. I don't see how you exist there among men anyhow, where there are no pretty girls to visit."

"That 's just where they are," declared Robert, lightly, but he slipped his hand over mine to give it a warning pressure. "Carriage loads of them drive up every day; you should come yourself sometimes."

I shrugged my shoulders. "Do you want me to?"

"No." He glanced meaningly at Henry as he spoke. "No, I don't believe I do."

"Who have been there?" I demanded.

Robert gave a list of half the families in the county, adding a word of comment now and then. I noticed a touch of sarcasm in his speech; it was as if he himself had spoken when Henry said, "I am sick of it."

I was half frightened at his vehemence, and blundered into saying the first thing

I thought: "There are not half so many ladies around there. Emily—"

Again a warning from Robert — this time a glance — cut me short.

"And I," I added airily.

"You!" cried Henry, in quick, teasing tones; "if Robert had given me half a chance —"

"Pshaw!" I tossed my head. "What would that have mattered? You would have forgotten me for the next pretty face you saw."

A shout of laughter derided both the vanity and the prophecy I had been betrayed into; but Henry took my words to heart. "You think me fickle," he accused.

I stammered at first over my answer, but then my light heart sent the lighter speech to my lips. "At least you are off with the old" — referring to his evident quarrel with Emily — "before you are on with the new."

"There will be no new."

Henry spoke so seriously that I could think of nothing further to jest about. I turned to watch the taut rope, and the little

1482318

boat cutting its way through the water behind us, and when I looked again towards him his face was white and stern. He stood up loosening the sail which hid the wharf from my sight; it slid to the boat's bottom and there on the wharf's edge, looking down at him, stood Emily. The red swept her cheek, her lips trembled,—for a second,—then she called a gay greeting. I sprang up on the wharf, caught her by the waist, and whirled her about.

"When did you come?"

"A moment ago."

"Oh, I mean from Middlesex."

"Yesterday."

"I hope you will stay at home now."

"Forever!" with mock solemnity.

I thought the men were close behind us as we climbed the bluff, but when I turned at the top Henry bent above the rope, fumbling at the knot, as if to make the boat the more secure, and Robert waited for him.

I saw Henry comfortably seated near Emily, lingered for a few polite words with them, then loitered off with Robert toward the summer-

house, which was cool and shaded from all eyes; but when we sat down they were close behind us. We strolled about the yard and back again, Henry so contriving it that he walked by my side, and again within the porch I stole a glance at Robert for sympathy. His quizzical look brought inspiration.

I knew that they were hungry, I declared, and that after that hot sail they were longing for some cool drink; there was milk in the dairy and cake in the sideboard, and it was yet an hour to supper; they should have something to eat and drink at once. "Robert, come help me!" I finished. And, once in the hall, I caught his hand, slipped through the parlor door, and shut it softly behind us. "There!" I whispered, "I am going to have one minute to myself anyhow."

There is one satisfaction in having a husband whom necessity calls from home — and but one: his love-making gathers force and passion, missing the langourous flow of daily affection. Robert leaned to kiss my hair; I tilted my head and kissed — him.

"How long can you stay?" I asked softly.

"Until to-morrow."

"O-h! Is Henry going to stay also?"

"Yes."

"And Emily?"

Robert laughed at my tone of dismay.

"I want to see her, to have her here; but just now I want no one but you." Had I learned to make love as well as Robert?

"Make the best of it. Give them a chance; maybe they will fight it out."

"Never," I groaned, as I turned the knob of the door noiselessly. No sound came from the porch. I glanced out as I stole across the hall, and saw that Henry sat there alone; in the dining-room, by the window, stood Emily, her hands clasped behind her back, her gaze on the river.

"Well!" she cried, as if in astonishment, "where have you been? I came to help." She spoke petulantly, but her lashes were wet. "I am hungry."

"For pity's sake! You shall have the very first piece. Here," cutting a huge slice from the rich, round loaf. "Eat it while I fix the tray."

"Give it to me; let me carry it out," she begged, when it was ready.

"No."

But she slipped it from beneath my hands and was gone. Her supple figure swayed as she held the heavy tray straight before her; her demure eyes were dangerous. I wondered how it was possible for Henry to look at her so carelessly when, with a manner that was a wistful challenge, she stood before him; but he was coldly and studiously polite — no more.

It was my blithe happiness alone which thawed the iciness between them. If they would be nothing else they must at least be friends here in my old home, on that porch where the four of us had often loitered while the tide rippled upon the beach, the wind rustled in the restless mulberries, and the river sparkled from shore to shore.

"Tell us of your visit, Emily," I asked when she had sat down on the bench by my side. "You enjoyed it?"

"Y-e-s," as if she was not altogether sure.

"What was the matter?" I insisted.

She straightened herself with a little air of defiance.

"Oh, there are no gentlemen left; they have all gone to the war."

"Nor were there any here — until now. Could n't you enjoy yourself without them?" I teased thoughtlessly.

"What is one to do?" she drawled.

Robert looked at her curiously, but Henry's gaze was fixed as if he saw nothing but the sparkling river and the misty shore beyond.

"Why, walk and drive; a hundred things!" I cried.

"'T is salt without its savor."

"Well, there are more men about here than there. Why did n't you stay at home?"

"One grows restless."

"With such a disposition as Miss Emily's, restlessness is natural." It was Henry who spoke, and Emily's eyes flashed.

"Am I the only one?" she demanded hotly. "Well, it 's not a sin; sometimes, perhaps, a virtue," she added flippantly.

"Perhaps," Henry repeated as carelessly as she herself had spoken.

This tilting must be stopped, but how? The sound of a rapidly ridden horse and the rattle of father's crutch on the back porch answered me. "Company!" he called as he came through the hall. "How good it is to see somebody! Emily, when did you come home, Miss? Pretty as a peach and saucy as ever, I'll be bound."

Emily swept him a courtesy, and Henry's lips twitched scornfully as he heard the greeting.

"How are you, Henry? wnere have you been keeping yourself? Why have n't you been up with Robert before? Plenty of pretty girls around here."

"Is that always the attraction?" Henry laughed, as father vigorously shook his hand.

"It depends on the man; now you —" father flourished his crutch in a comprehensive sweep. Emily laughed.

"Plenty of ladies visiting the fort, too, I hear." Father was delighted with the unexpected guests. He talked glibly and gayly once he had dropped into a chair and leaned his crutch against the side of the doorway.

"Spoiling you to death, are they?" he chaffed, "coming to see you and bringing you everything good to eat they can lay their hands on. Good times you are having now; make the most of them," he ended shortly.

For days father had been going about thoughtful and absorbed, with no tingling, eager interest in everything about him. I knew no reason for it. We had no letters, no papers, yet he managed to find out somehow what was going on; and while those of our neighbors whom I saw were jubilantly boastful, he was grave and anxious.

"Well," he added after a pause, as if he had followed out a line of thought and spoke its conclusion, "war has not come very close to us yet."

"It will soon," said Robert, slowly.

"Not soon enough for me," declared Henry, "I am going to it."

"How?" The words from father were like a flash, so quick were they, so imperative.

"I have asked to be transferred. I leave this week." Henry looked straight before him as he spoke; none of us dared look at

Emily, but her fingers rested on the porch rail beneath my eyes. Her clutch tightened till her nails were blue.

"I thought perhaps you would lend me a horse."

"Certainly, certainly!"

"To go and see my mother."

"Of course, you shall have one in the morning."

"I fear I must trouble you now.'

"Oh, come! You are not going to-night."

"I must."

"Man, it will soon be dark."

"I should know the road if I were blindfolded." Henry crimsoned from cheek to forehead, the first sign of shaken composure he had shown that evening; and suddenly we recalled the reason why that way had grown as familiar as a daily trodden path — the lane from Emily's home ran into the road a mile away.

Henry recovered himself first of all. "It will be moonlight," he said carelessly.

"As you say. There is the supper bell. I will tell Sam now." Father hobbled away

on his errand, as we went into the dining-room. I made all the ado possible over seating them, then seized on the first topic I could think of, though it was a silly one.

Father had developed one curious custom during his loneliness. The moment he put his foot out of doors the animals followed him in a train; but, strangely enough, with his friendliness for nearly every living beast, he had no real fondness for that companion of most men, a dog. Those on the plantation must keep to their place, and that was outside the house, not within. His household pets were cats. Five of them were allowed the freedom of the place, and into most curious habits father's vigorous will had trained them. They stood now, as they did at every ringing of the bell, in a straight and sober guard before the hearth, their eyes eager, their tails waving in wistful interrogation-points above their backs.

"Fine fellows," father declared when he entered and caught the subject of our laughter. "I had to have something around when Lucy left."

"Beautiful substitutes," murmured Emily.

"I am flattered," I declared. "Tom is the favorite," I chattered on; but at mention of his name Tom stepped out of line. Father's hand was instantly on the slender switch by his side; he struck the offender a slight cut, and the cat stepped soberly back into place.

"How hungry they look; it is cruel!" I cried.

"'They also serve— " began Robert; but I tossed a lump of sugar at him which hit him deftly on the cheek, stopping such nonsense. Father was scandalized, but the tension was broken. No hidden fire of feeling was left to flame suddenly around the table; but light talk and soft clatter of china were within the room, and, without, the sound of the inrushing tide and the rustling leaves.

Sam waited at the back porch when we came out. "I done brought de hoss," he called.

"You will pardon my haste," Henry begged.

"You had better wait till morning," father

again urged him. "Your mother will be abed by the time you get there."

"She will get up quickly enough when she hears me call. I can hear the dogs barking now, and see her leaning out of the window," Henry added happily. He loved his mother devotedly.

"I will see you again in the morning," he added as he sprang into the saddle, lifted his hat, and the horse, fresh from a long rest, cavorted sidewise out of the gate. As it closed behind him Emily shivered. "I must go home, too," she declared.

"Why, Emily, the idea!" I cried. "You know you came to spend the night."

"I will come again soon. I must go now. I have been away from home so long. Mother is not well either. I ought not to have left her so soon. It is not far across the fields; go over with me. You can have the walk back by yourselves," she added mischievously.

We lost both our guests, but I am afraid we did not miss them much. Certainly we wished for neither as we walked homeward

across the wheat field, the narrow path between the tall, yellow grain keeping us close to each other's side. The wheat ears hung heavy and limp with dew, the smell of the ripening grain filled the air, fireflies twinkled like fairy lights hung low and thick; the moon swung high above us, lighting the levels of tall grain, showing the black smudge of the woods on one hand, and on the other a gleam of the river like a silver line upon the picture's edge. It lighted up also the brass buttons on Robert's coat, the buckle of his belt, the gleam of his dark eyes beneath the wide brim of his hat.

A quail whistled cheerily from her covert, a whippoorwill called near by. We loitered under the summer sky, its beauties about us, its pulses in our hearts.

VIII

HOURS like these shortened the summer days and brightened those of winter; the days between were gray and colorless, gladdened only by hope.

I made no visits to the farm, though Robert went now and then. The crops were fine, he told me exultantly; corn-house and barn-loft were well filled, the fodder-stack well rounded, the yard was full of poultry. Did I not wish to go and see?

"No," I answered imperturbably.

"Why?"

"I don't want to."

"I don't see why you should n't." Robert waited impatiently to see what I would say, but I did not speak. I was remembering. I recalled that morning when I left, the hour when Lady's every hoof-beat and every turn of the wheel sped me further from the small house, the shadowing cherry tree, the stretch

of fields, and the encircling woods. Go down that lane alone,—I was always alone without Robert,—wander over the house, leave it once more! Some pain is needless; this was such. I would stay in the half-stagnant peace I had created for myself. And so I lived until that peace was torn with agony, stunned with fear.

On a sullen, slow-dawning morning when the mists clung close to the river's breast, when there were no shore-lines, no distances, but enveloping folds of drifting fog, we heard, low, faint, and dull, the firing of heavy guns. We were at the breakfast table that morning, father and I alone. The lighted candles flickered yellow and ghastly against the gray light which shone as through windows of opaque glass. We could hear the heavy drops of mist as they rolled from branch to branch of the trees, close outside the window, and trickled to the ground; the tiny rills beat drop by drop from the shingled eaves; the acrid smoke blown down the chimney by the wind stung eyes and nostrils.

Father's face looked ghastly in the mingled lights; the heavy thatch of hair shading his forehead made his blue eyes seem cavernous.

"What a morning!" he grumbled when he came into the room. "Where is Tom?" The other cats stood in a row before the hearth. "There he is; come here, sir!" Father stooped to stroke his black fur. "Faugh! how wet you are! Where have you been? You should stay in out of the damp. Ugh! I wish it would pour; anything would be better than this. This fog rasps your nerves. Give me some coffee," as Sam came in bringing the steaming urn.

"Come on, Lucy. No use standing at that window, you can't see a yard before you, can't see your hand before your face. Come and get your breakfast."

But once at the table he was unusually quiet. "Why don't you eat?" he looked up to ask.

"I am not hungry."

"Sam, pass the waffles to Miss Lucy. Child," after a keen, searching look at me,

"you are worrying yourself sick; what 's the use? The very first gun has not been fired at the fort. They are having a good time there, those men. You had better be thinking about all the petting they are getting; they will be spoiled to death. Why don't you go and see Robert?"

"He can come to see me," I answered proudly. It was my old point of view.

Father chuckled.

"He does not like visitors forever coming there. He says —" I stopped; what Robert had said had not been complimentary; it had been carelessly spoken, and I would not repeat it.

"You are a home body like your mother. She used to declare that she never wanted to lose sight of the smoke of her own chimney." Father was silent for a while, as he always was after speaking of mother. The very mention of her seemed to send his thoughts back to recollections to which he clung.

I crumbled the biscuit on my plate with idle fingers.

"You should have more self-control," he scolded. "You don't suppose every man in a battle is killed. Your great-grandfather fought through one war and your grandfather through another; I have missed them all." His tone of regret was ludicrous.

"I do believe you are sorry." And as I spoke, at that moment, came the dull, reverberating booming over the mist-covered river. The fork I held fell clattering on the thin china plate, shattering it.

"Oh, my God!" I breathed as I sprang from my chair.

Father hobbled to the porch as fast as his crutch could carry him; the negroes ran from their quarters to the bluff overlooking the river, where the fog clung like wool. I could not have taken a step. My knees shook under me as I listened to those sounds which boomed and thundered and echoed through the fog, and set my being a-quiver in response to their last faint roll. So I stood when father, remembering me, hurried back. He started to speak, but I did not hear; I rushed past him up to my

room, and flung myself down beneath that deep window looking riverward. "God!" I cried, "God!"

Not another thought did my heart hold, not a single word could I frame; but as the silence settled and the mist-drops rolled like far-off guns to my excited fancy, I breathed a prayer with that cry: "God, keep him! Save him! God, keep him safe!"

No faintest notion of prayer had I beyond that formula of a daily plea founded upon and built about the prayer my mother had taught me. Grown woman that I was, my lips had framed none other than that which at night-tide acknowledged my homage to the God of heaven and of earth — though it was to the first I bent my knee; that far-off, misty divinity which it comforts one to think of, when all goes well, as ruling with benign justice the universe.

I, a part of His creation, had lived as unquestioningly as a bird sings her song of summer; but now when agony tore at my heart, I sent a cry up to His remoteness. I remembered that other word by which he

was sometimes called: I supplicated not only God, but Father.

The mists folded back from the river, and the low clouds came down in rain, which rolled on the roof and hissed in the hearth; but nothing drowned those other sounds.

I heard father's voice, and, stumbling to my feet, went down the stair to the hall where he waited me. "Lucy, Lucy!" he called as I staggered on the last step. "Come out into the air."

But as he opened the door the reverberation, which had for a short time ceased, broke out anew, long, sullen, and insistent. I ran out into the yard. I felt as if I must clutch the hated folds of rain and mist, tear them asunder, wrench from them the secret that cloud and distance held.

"You are getting soaking wet!" father cried. "Sam, run, bring Miss Lucy's shawl." Father hobbled after me with it, and folded it about my head and shoulders; he himself was bareheaded, with the rain-drops clinging to his thick silver hair. I saw them when I looked up to thank him, but when his eyes

met mine he cried out: "Child, child!" and then he put his hand on my shoulder, bent close to me. "You must be brave."

"I cannot."

"You must hope."

The tremble of my lip answered him.

"At least you are not going to stay out here. Get in, every one of you!" to the trembling servants. "Get to work."

But how could they? How could we wait with any show of self-control, of patience? I made no pretence of it. I sank down into a chair in the parlor, when the booming began again. "Oh, God!" I cried, as I flung my arms above my head, "to think that any bomb we have heard may have been his death, that he may now be dead! I cannot endure it."

"You have got to."

"I cannot."

"There have been no cowards in our family," — with cutting sternness.

"What do you know of cowards," I blazed; "you, a man who knows what it is to be in the midst of things?"

I did not heed the bitterness of the single word he spoke: "Yes."

"To fight, to die — it is easy. It is quickly done, there is not a breath for thought; but the woman at home, safe, protected, — ah, yes, and cared for, — she knows that battles rage, that the one being whose life is more than life to her is in the midst of them; that any second may end it — and she not even know for days, for weeks. It is the uncertainty of it which kills. And she must sit at home and be brave, you say; pshaw! speak truth! She must sit and suffer."

"Lucy," said father, very gently, as if he were afraid of me, "where did you hear such things?"

"I never heard," I flamed; "I know."

"Well, well," soothingly, "it is no time for hard words," — he walked restlessly about the room, — "but for patience, patience and bravery."

He went to the window, out to the hall; I heard the porch door close; I knew he was again outside. It was useless to urge anything but listening, watching; the negroes

gathered again upon the bluff under the tall mulberries, their faces ashy with fear, the rain standing thick on their woolly heads. At noon the clouds lifted, rolled back from the horizon, and drifted away. Our world lay before us — tender mists on the opposite shores, green grass before our door, blue skies overhead.

That day was but the beginning. At evening, morning, or noon, but never again incessant, the cannonading was heard. There was no heavy firing after that first day or two, but the constant menace, the never-long-silent reminder by the enemy of a victory already won whose fruits could be waited for; for not a gun from the forts on either side of the York could equal the attacking party's range.

How I lived from day to day I do not know; I slept as if I were dead from exhaustion; I ate because father made me. His strong will kept every wheel of the plantation life moving. He ordered the spring work, the ploughing, the planting, as if there were no such things as danger and

war. When I made some comment on it he was ablaze with indignation.

"What do you expect me to do? sit down and hold my hands because there is a gunboat down the York River? We are all here, we are all alive; don't we get hungry? haven't the negroes to be fed? Who is going to do it, I wonder? No, sir, everything will go on just the same. The land is in good condition, splendid; I will plant more corn than ever; yes, sir, just to let the neighbors see. Scared half to death they are, some of them, sitting still, doing nothing. What's the use? There is just one way in this world to live — to plan as if we were to live forever, and then to live each day as if it were our last."

It was late in May that he handed me a letter, and listened neither to my cry of delight nor to any question as to how he had gotten it, but shortly bade me read it. The blessed lines were of Robert's forming.

DEAR LUCY [it began, coldly enough], — I have just heard from your father —

"When did you write?" I demanded.

"Read on."

and written him concerning you both. You must do as he has advised. It may be hard for you to go back home without me — as you have always declared you would not do — but you must go now. This fort and Yorktown must be evacuated. As soon as it is known that we have left, the enemy will occupy them. The river will be patrolled by gunboats, and the adjacent country will be under their control. Bellevue is too conspicuous to escape.

There is no time to write the words I long to say [how stiff he was!]; nor is it well to harrow you with vain wishes. May Providence watch over and protect you, and may there be yet many happy days in store for us both.

ROBERT.

P. S. We evacuate the fort to-morrow and march to Richmond.

When I looked up at father he was startled. It was the joy he saw in my face, I think. He had expected tears or remonstrances, possibly; but I had only one thought for that moment. I held in my hands the lines which Robert himself had pencilled; he was safe and well.

"How did you get it?"

"I sent Sam."

"And did n't let me know!"

"I — I — well, I did what was best. You see what he says?" impatiently.

Then it began to strike home to me.

"You understand?"

Yes, I understood. I had been slow enough, stupid enough, but now I knew. We were to run away, to leave the old house because it was threatened and unsafe. In a passion of revolt I knew how I loved it. If I had ever thought that the ties which bound me to it were frail, I knew now how strong they were. All the love of home and associations woke with a thousand clamoring voices and tugged but the stronger at my heart because they had slumbered. I looked about me, at the porch, the trees, the river; the wide yard and white-paled garden and vine-wreathed summer-house; the weather-stained brick house, with wing stretched toward the quarters; and father's glance followed mine as passionately. "Well, well!" he cried hoarsely, "I feared it long ago. I saw it coming. I knew the forts could not be held. They have been longer than I thought, or

they have been slower in Richmond. It 's a wonder they did n't see it long ago. It 's a mercy that they have lost but one life — bombs bursting at any hour, on the embankments, inside the fort."

"You told me there was no danger," I accused hotly.

"Never! I said — Well, it will soon be over now. I sent Sam to find out what Robert thought."

"Why did n't you let me know he was going?" I again demanded.

"Humph! You would have had a dozen fits; would have written page after page, and cried yourself blind over every one of them. No, I just sent him off quietly."

"How is Robert? What did he say?"

Father laughed. "There is Sam," pointing with his crutch barnward. "Go, see for yourself." And I ran out to make a hundred inquiries.

But I learned little that I did not already know. The letter was written the day before. Even then the fort might be evacuated and the soldiers on the march; soon

the gunboats might show, sullen and strong, proclaiming their ownership of the waterway, and lie at last before West Point. This time there would be no resistance from irregular soldiery flushed with enthusiasm. The men were with the regiments far away, those marching from the forts being the last to go.

We made a frenzy of preparation for flight. The house was to be locked; the negroes were to live in their cabins and keep as closely as possibly to the old routine; one of their number was left in charge, and father would be back and forth. Our trunks were packed and started off by midday; and in the afternoon, as I came down the wide stair after some last work in the rooms above, I stopped on the landing for one long look at the wide hall, where the springtide shadows showed along the floor. As I paused, father called me imperatively.

He stood in the porch door, his face red with excitement; and his hand shook as he lifted his crutch to point with it. "Look!" he commanded.

CALLED TO THE FIELD

Forging up the river, cutting the pathway of the sunset asunder, the smoke hanging in black rolling clouds above her stacks, came the first gunboat of the enemy.

A very passion of resentment and rebellion seized me. I whipped off the shawl of crimson crêpe I had thrown around my shoulders and waved it wildly above my head. "Hurrah!" I cried. "Hurrah for Jefferson Davis and The Confederate States!"

Father wheeled; the angry light shone like steel in his eyes. "Look at her!" he cried, pointing his crutch scornfully toward me; and then with the very essence of sarcasm in his voice, "And, man, she would run from a black bug!"

IX

WHEN I had blown out my candle that night I stood under the sloping roof of the dormer window for a long look outwards. The mulberries were in full leaf, the river, where it showed through their foliage, ran gray and dusky except for the mirrored stars flashed here and there from rippling waves; and its mighty and resistless rush, with the mystery of night and silence, touched me with awe. There is some instinct deep within me which quickens with sympathy for those who, not understanding the great and loving spirit of God, peopled the dim vistas of the woods, the bubbling springs, the sparkling rills, the rivers' flow, the tides of the sea and its still depths with deities. Either must I have adored the spirit of each or believed in the Father of all. How else could the chill of the blood, the adoration of the soul, the stilling of one's breath, be born?

CALLED TO THE FIELD

Something in the forces of nature thrills each soul. The child, or a people in its childhood, interprets such feeling by attributing to those phases which touch the human heart most deeply some attendant spirit striving to make its influence felt through the grosser human part to the finer spiritual. The full-grown man, the nation come to its maturity, realizes in all the One Great God who alike counts the unseen stars and numbers the hairs of our head and sees the beauty of the lilies of the field.

I leaned against the sloping walls, the long plaits of my hair trailing across the wide sill, my soul gone out in some vague wandering which words could not hold nor tell. How long I saw it before I was conscious of it I do not know, but slowly I became aware of a figure moving beyond the mulberries. I lost it in the shadows, by the obscurings of the branches, but caught it again standing boldly and watchfully on the bluff, and I turned icy with the first fear I had felt that day.

My voice shook when I leaned over the balusters and called, "Father!"

He answered instantly.

"Who is that out in the yard?" I asked, when he stood below me in the hall.

"Where?" — with an alertness which quickened my pulses.

"Under the trees, watching the house."

"Oh, Sam!" There was evident relief in his voice.

"What is he doing?" I insisted.

"Oh! I thought he had better be on the lookout; no telling what might happen. Danger? not the least bit of it. I just thought — well, it will do no harm to be on the safe side. Run along back to bed, go right to sleep; you will have to be up early in the morning."

Obedience to one part of that command was impossible. I lay long awake, shivering with some feeling which was neither cold nor fear, but a keen physical discomfort to which Sam's footsteps were a constant incentive. So I was asleep at dawn and had to be awakened. I hurried into my clothes and down into the dining-room, but the meal had been already served. Father sat in his chair, and behind

him, with expectant faces turned tablewards and their tails waving high in air, stood the cats in solemn array. Tom alone was missing. Father watched the door impatiently. When he emptied the cream jug into a bowl which he placed carefully on the hearth, the black had not yet appeared. I paid little attention to father's complaints concerning it, for it seemed too trivial at such a time. The carriage stood ready at the door, and crowded about the porch the negroes waited. It was the hour I most dreaded.

"Are you ready?" I called to father.

He came out on the porch, a frown of anxiety showing deep between his brows. "Has Sam had his breakfast?" he asked, as he looked at me, and then at the sorrowful crowd near me.

"Yes, sah," answered Sam, standing at the horse's head.

Molly by my side had flung her apron over her head, and beneath its shelter was sobbing and moaning. "Father," I begged, "let us go at once and as quietly as we can; if we wait —"

"Well, well! Just get ready." He hobbled away to the stables.

"Marse Willum done gone to look fer Tom," chuckled Sam.

"What does he want with him?" I asked, tartly. It was ridiculous to have father fussing over a cat at such a time.

"La! don't you know? He 's gwine carry ebery las' cat erway wid him." Sam's long lank body fairly doubled up as he laughed. "He done tole me las' night to bring him a bag, a big, strong one; an' den dis mornin' Tom he 's a-missin'."

"What in the world put such an idea in father's head?"

"Miss Lucy, Marse Willum done pet dem cats too long. He cyarnt go erway an' leab 'em. He knows 't ain't a niggah on dis place will tek cyar o' dem. Niggahs 'spises cats mos' in gin'ral, anyways; dey wants a houn' dog ebery time, an' houn's an' cats dey nebbah did git erlong togeddah; and Marse Willum he cyarnt leab 'em; an' he don't know how to leab ary colt or calf or niggah on dis place. He 'll carry you home,

but he 'll be back hyar mos' de time, you see."

I had been long learning father's pitying heart. Even now it took Sam to open my eyes, Sam whom none of us accounted very sensible, and whom I had spent hours in teaching.

"'T warnt fer you," he went on talking to the sable ring of his audience as well as to me, "he would n't go a step. Think he 'd run erway — Marse Willum? Lan', he ain't feard of nuthin' in dis worl', he 'd nebbah leab dis place. But he cyarnt keep you hyar, an' he cyarnt leab you dyar by yo' se'f — an' dyar 't is."

A sympathetic understanding of his words was on every face near me. With their instinct they had divined a situation which had disclosed no part of itself to me but the necessary action. I looked at Sam, at Molly's covered head, at every sorrowful face. I went from one to another — No, I will not write that! I cannot picture that leave-taking. Father came back before I had finished and waited for me by the buggy.

"Lucy," he began, "would you mind — Child, don't sob so! make it as easy for them as you can; you know how they will grieve anyhow. Would you mind if I did n't go with you? Sam can take you. I will be there by night."

A sudden fear of the loneliness I might feel smote me. "You will certainly come," I begged.

"Yes, yes; certainly. You don't mind."

"N-o."

"Tell them good-by again," father whispered, nodding to those crowding about us. "Say it bravely. It 's just for a little while. You will be back again soon. Pshaw! you must n't mind it, nor they either. Come!"

So I held my head high, even if my eyes were wet, and went once more from one to another. As I sprang into the carriage I heard father's low, "Quick, Sam! The gate is open; drive on." I looked back to see him standing straight and tall against a pillar watching me; but the vision was but short-lived. Sam drove at break-neck speed, and the road was none too smooth.

When we reached the woods we went slowly. The land was low and swampy; the growth of tree and bush and vine, rank. A corduroy road stretched along half a mile which, but for its bridging, would have been sometimes impassable; rails and poles were alike hidden under a slush of black mud. The horse, knowing his long task, went with bent head and slow step; we bumped and jolted over the rough way.

Half-way across we heard a horseman strike the other end. The horse, Sam, and I, alike, pricked up our ears and kept a sharp lookout ahead; we turned a shaded curve and met Robert riding gayly toward us. How splendid he looked! Was he handsome? A stranger would have noted first his thatch of thick red hair; but his broad, white forehead, his deep-set, dark eyes, his firm, well-moulded chin — I was not analyzing then. I looked and looked, my breath but a light flutter of delight in my throat. Shadow and sunlight flickered over him and over Lady's velvety flanks.

"Sam, you rascal! Get down there," were

his first words. "You can ride my horse; I will drive." Sam was out in an instant, and in another was on Lady's back. Robert was by my side.

"Ride on!" he commanded the grinning negro. "And you need n't look back." Robert's brown eyes twinkled as he warned him.

"We evacuated the fort yesterday," he explained, after the first blissful moment of our meeting. "We are on the march to Richmond. I got permission to come by and say—and see you," he corrected himself quickly. "Lady is so swift I can catch up with the regiment by noon." He told their line of march and where he could overtake them. "I was afraid you would be gone."

"An hour later and you would have missed me."

"But you see I did not."

I had never seen Robert in gayer mood. If any trace of the emotion which had racked me was visible on face or in manner he gave no sign of seeing it. We stole that hour

between his long absences and a future which might hold any fate; our spirits sprang to meet it as blithely as the birds sang in the hoary trees arching overhead. I told the tale of father's perplexity, and he laughed delightedly; it was easy to be gay while the sun shone, the fresh breeze beat against my face, and Robert was by my side. I even forgot my own affairs long enough to talk of Emily's. Where was Henry? I asked. In what regiment had he enlisted? When had he been heard from? I scarcely noticed Robert's uneasy manner, though I remembered it afterwards, his short replies, his broken phrases of "difficult service," "uncertain headquarters," nor how completely he turned the theme to Emily.

I could not tell him much of her. In the fear of those last months the households on the distant farms had shrunken into themselves. Little visiting was done. Emily and her mother had been left alone at home, and we wondered if they would take refuge in Middlesex or if they would dare to stay; the long windings of the creek before their

house was reached seemed to render them secure.

The horse went slowly, and the moments were crowded with quick words; but the river road came at last to the county road, and there sat Sam on Lady, the sunlight shining on her dappled sides.

Robert had said good-by before we came to the meeting of the roads, while we were still out of sight of Sam's mischievous eyes, but this was the parting. He jumped from the buggy as Sam slipped from the horse; I, too, was in the road before Sam knew it.

"I am going to say good-by to Lady," I cried hysterically, as I ran up to her, leaned my cheek against her slender head, and stroked it gently. All thought, all feeling was benumbed; how could I let him go, now, at last? I looked at the familiar road, the pines bordering it on one hand, the weather-worn fence shutting in the fields on the other, — the wild roses and blackberries abloom in its corners, — the cloud of white butterflies fluttering over a pool drying by the wayside, up at the soft white clouds drift-

ing overhead. So I had seen it on any summer's day of my eighteen years; I had come to it, now, for this crucial moment.

Robert would not look at me. The sublime yet sad truth we learn in the agonizing hour of life is that we must face such moments alone. The great things of the soul are settled with God, not man. Robert knew that I myself must gather the strength I needed; he mercifully left me to do it. He bent above the wild roses, making a pretence of plucking them.

I leaned harder against Lady, pulled her head lower, and into her silken ear whispered a command; then I felt a touch on my shoulder.

"I must go, dear." Robert put his hand filled with roses upon my shoulder, and stood looking down at me. "Remember, I leave you in charge at home," he warned gently. "'Zekiel takes all his orders from you."

It seemed absurd. I looked up quickly, and met Robert's glance; he smiled bravely, but was there a suspicion of moisture in his eyes?

"So I told him when I was home a week ago. I knew this must come. You must let me go now."

He caught me up, lifted me into the buggy, and put the roses on my lap — he knew my love of them. We gazed at each other for a breath's space while the pines sighed softly. "The roses at home are blooming, too," he said as he stepped aside, and waved to Sam. But when I saw him last he stood in the middle of the road, his head bared, his face toward us; Lady, by the roadside had turned her head and was watching him with big, questioning eyes.

X

"I WILL never go back without you." I had said it to Robert and vowed it to myself; but when the road plunged into the wood, when the horse trotted noiselessly and the wheels made no sound on the thick pine-needles, when the great trees interlaced their wide branches overhead, my heart lightened of its intolerable load. I seemed nearer Robert with every turn of the wheel; and when I stood in the doorway, and saw the roses abloom, as he had said, I felt a touch of companionship which was as inexpressible as it was intangible. I could meet Mammy with a face almost as shining as her own.

"Lan', Miss Lucy, but I *is* glad to see you! Why did n't you come befo'? Why did n't you come wid Marse Robert? What you mean by leabin' me all dese days, an' you ain't nebbah pahted from me befo' since

de day you was bohn? I come mighty nigh comin' up dyar to Bellevue myse'f, deed I did. I was fair pinin' fer de sight o' you." Mammy bustled about, putting my bundles away, hanging up my clothes, doing a dozen small services while she talked.

"I was jes fair sot on it one time, but Marse Robert he come 'long 'bout dat time an' he say 'no.' Jes sot right down hyar in yo' own chair, I wants to look at you good. Er! hum!" with long keen scutiny. If she saw any change to deplore or to admire she held her peace concerning it. "Lan'!" she exclaimed again. "Ise glad to have you back. Ise gwine keep you dis time sho an' tek cyar o' you good, dat I is. I done promised Marse Robert so when he come home. 'Warnt wuth while fer him to ax me. He say, ''Ria, you gwine look after Miss Lucy good fer me?' an' I says, 'I gwine look after her good fer myse'f, Ise been doin' dat ebbah since she was 'bout one hour ole.' 'T was kind o' sassy, but I was teched up. 'Ain't dat my chile?' I says; an' he say, 'Yes, so 't is.' But den he sort o' smiled an' say

low, lak he talkin' to hisse'f, 'an' my wife. You mus' tek cyar o' her fer bof,' he 'clared loud an' strong. An' I gwine do it, honey; you trus' yo' Mammy fer dat.

"When is Marse Willum comin'?" she asked suddenly, for we had both fallen silent after that speech about Robert, and it was best we should not.

"To-night."

"Dat so? Well, dyar's jes a hundred things to see befo' den. I wants you to see de chicken-coops jes one time, chock-a-block, ebery one o' dem, wid de purtiest things you ebbah sot yo' eyes on. An' de yaller, she's hatchin' scatterin', same as usual."

"How is Miss Nancy?" I asked, when we were out in the yard.

"She 's got de rheumatiz. De Lawd only knows why she ain't daid wid it long ergo, goin' erroun' dressed up lak a scan'lous ghos'. She's a-payin' fer her foolishness, sho."

"I must go and see her," I declared at once.

"'Deed, you mus', honey. She done axed

aftah you, an' axed aftah you. Lan'! dyar's 'Zekiel! Ef he ain't come a-trapsin' clean up from de 'baccer fiel'! an' Dick 's a-trottin' at his heels. Dey is done heard somehow dat you is come. Praise de Lamb! dis place ain't gwine be so lonesome now. Look at 'em," she chuckled; "jes grinnin' till ebery toof dey got is shinin'."

I was besieged between them. 'Zekiel in one breath wanted to tell me all the state of the farm: what fields were planted, which lying waste for rest; how many calves frisked in the pasture; to boast of a week-old colt within the stable. Mammy was as urgent about her affairs of lock-room and hen-house. It took short time to find that the half-ruined place which Robert had bought had been reclaimed to prosperity; well tilled fields and mended fences and improved out-buildings all bespoke it, and seeing their state I recalled Robert's plea: "Take care of everything for me!"

I felt as if in solemn charge. I was once more Lucy Aylett. At Bellevue I had felt myself my father's daughter, though changed

and unreal; here, rimmed by the pines, far-off from all that I had known, save as Robert's wife, I found before the day was over one precious thing, — myself.

Every hour was full until father came. He rode in his gig, and as his horse came tearing at break-neck speed down the lane, the spokes of his wheels, revolving in the level beams of the low-swinging sun, were radiant in their light. His face was anxious and furrowed, his lips straight-set, as he flung down the reins and the horse instantly came to a stand-still.

I ran out to meet him. "How long you have been!" I called.

"Yes, yes! I couldn't help it." He brightened at the sound of my cheerful voice. "Such a time as I had getting off." He began to tell me one incident of the day after another as he got out carefully, and cautiously lifted from the vehicle's foot a loosely tied bag.

"You, Dick!" he greeted the boy, as Dick came hurrying out. "Hello, wait there a moment! What must I do with them.

Lucy?" looking helplessly down at the bag he held. "Had I better let him carry them to the barn? Must I turn them loose here? What do you think?"

He stooped, untied the string, but held the mouth of the bag together in his hands while he looked at me perplexedly. Before I could answer, the question was settled for him. With one mighty squirm and spring, Tom was out. He stood for a second, tail erect and spread big as a fox's brush, the hair standing straight on his back, his yellow eyes bulging; then, with a hideous yowl, he sped like a black streak straight down the road to the barn. The others sprang after him, knocking father's crutch from beneath his arm in the rush. He fell back against the palings, clutching them for support; Dick flung himself on the ground rolling and howling with delight.

"You black rascal! You black rascal!" spluttered father.

"Which, which?" I cried. "Who is the black rascal?"

Father was too offended to reply. He

looked from me, holding up by the gate, to Dick rolling over on the ground, then picked up his crutch and hobbled off stable-wards. But I caught up to him, ran my arm through his, and faced him about. "Let them alone," I cried; "they won't go away farther than the barn. 'Let them alone,' I droned, 'and they'll come home, bringing their tails behind them.'" I could not help it, and I think father forgave the teasing.

Our home-coming had been saved its touch of tragedy, and next morning Tom with the other cats stood in line before our fireplace. Whenever Dick's eyes rolled so that he could see them — which was often — he grinned from ear to ear.

XI

WE had been home but a week when we heard that the forts at Gloucester Point and Yorktown were occupied; we had been there but two weeks when we heard that Bellevue had been raided.

Father may have known what to expect from the fortunes of war. Robert must have anticipated them when he warned us that Bellevue was too conspicuous; but to me it was a dreadful and monstrous injustice that our corn-house and barn-loft, smoke-house and stable had been swept clean; that the hay-stacks had been burned in the fields; that some of the negroes had run away, some had been carried off to work at the fort, and only a few remained.

Sam was amongst those carried to the fort. He was one of Mammy's six children, of whom only two were left, the youngest

and the oldest; and he was her favorite. Dick had been allowed to grow much as he chose, but Sam, lank-looking and half sick always, had been spoiled and humored to confirmed laziness.

Mammy had listened with moanings and mutterings, and yet entire resignation, to the tale of the losses at Bellevue. She had even seemed to derive some sort of agonizing satisfaction at their completeness; but when Sam was mentioned, her half-closed lids flew wide open, every inch of her great size stiffened. "Sam! What dat you say 'bout him?"

When she took it in she plunged for the house; only one man was great enough to help her in that extremity. "Marse Willum!" she shrieked. "Marse Willum!"

With dumb lips and strained eyes "Marse Willum" sat before the empty hearth in the chamber. He never turned his head at the sound of Mammy's heavy, rushing footsteps, nor at her cry.

"Lawd! Marse Willum; Lawd, Lawd!" was all she could at first say.

Father made an impatient movement in his chair.

"What is gwine come o' us?"

"Nothing," father snapped.

"Nuthin'! Does you call it nuthin' to be took up an' marched off an' —"

"What are you talking about anyhow?" Father wheeled so that he could see Mammy where she stood in the middle of the floor, wringing her hands, the tears rolling down her smooth, fat cheeks.

"What you think I 'm talkin' 'bout?" in hot indignation; "I 'm talkin' 'bout Sam."

Father had thought her lamentations were for Bellevue. He was too mad to sit still. He got up, fitted his crutch under his arm. "Sam! Sam!" he blazed.

"What you think I 'm talkin' 'bout if 't ain't my own chile? Did you think —" Sudden light seemed to break in upon her. "Marse Willum, you ain't distressin' o' yo'se'f 'bout de place? Don't you sorrow 'bout dat! All dem trials an' tribulations, dey is in de han's o' de Lawd. He 'll mek 'em all work togeddah fer good an' fer His glory. Yes,

sah," in a high sing-song, "jes you put yo' trus' in Him, an' don't you fret."

"Fret, you old numbskull, you! Take your preaching home to yourself; you are the one that 's making a fuss. Put *your* trust in the Lord," in a tone of the most intense sarcasm; "don't you fret!" father shouted.

Mammy listened with eyes rolled upwards, mouth agape. "Dat 's my chile," she said simply; "dat 's dif'runt."

"Yes," father snorted, "it usually is different when a thing is yours, touches you."

"Marse Willum, don't you be cantankerous," Mammy begged, as she fell to wringing her hands afresh. "Tell me what you 'spose dey 's gwine do wid Sam."

"Hang him."

"Oh, my Gawd, my Gawd!" Mammy fell down on the floor and flung her apron over her head. "My Gawd!" she moaned, as she rocked herself to and fro. "I thought so."

Father watched her for a moment, then came nearer and poked at her with his crutch. "Get up. Don't make a fool of yourself.

You know better than that. They won't hang him unless they know more about him than I do. Lucy, get her up; make her hush. She will set me crazy."

I knelt by Mammy and put my arms around her, comforted her as best I could; but get up she would not. She sat still on the floor, and when she could speak she began once more to question. "You says you knows dey ain't gwine — ain't gwine —" she choked over the dreadful word.

"No, they will do something worse —" My hand was on her shoulder and I felt it quiver and shake, but she sat speechless. "They 'll put him to work."

"Work!" cried Mammy in dismay. "Sam nebbah did do no work in all his bohn days."

"He will do it now."

"De onlies' thing in the worl' he knows how to do is to hitch a hoss an' wait on de table."

"Perhaps that 's what they want him for."

Mammy was too ignorant of camp life to understand the irony of that suggestion; and strangely enough she was comforted by it.

She stumbled clumsily to her feet and started to leave the room. At the door she paused with her hand on the latch. Her black face was full of pity and sympathy, now that her worst fears were quelled.

"Don't you worry, Marse Willum," she soothed; "jes think you might a' been dyar, you an' Miss Lucy," — she seemed to think that might have meant any fate, — "an' hyar you is safe an' soun'. De Lawd, He 'll tek cyar o' His own."

"Turn Sam over to Him, then."

"I done dat long ergo, sah, de very day he was bohn." She closed the door gently as she went out.

From that day news of disasters came so fast that they ran together in a blur of horror and fear; news from the army of sick and wounded and dead; news from the country of raids and losses and constant terror; that Emily's home had been burned, and she and her mother were refugees in Middlesex. Emily's mother was possessed of a shrewish tongue whose stinging properties were well known; she would not restrain it even before

a hostile soldiery, and in revenge for the hard thrusts she flung at them, they had made her homeless. I wrote to Emily as soon as I heard it and begged her to visit me; but there had been no answer, and I feared the letter, sent from hand to hand, had never reached her.

Mails there were none. Our tidings filtered through somehow, slowly, surely — and sometimes they were deadly. When the few neighbors met they looked at one another with tense faces, each afraid of what the other might know.

But whatever was known of battles fought and lost or won, of dead or wounded or missing, drifted first to the centre of our neighborhood — The Ordinary. The old tavern which had given to the cross-roads its name had been for years a quiet dwelling-place; below it, in the angle of the road, stood the store and post-office, with the wide treadway of a cotton-gin, long disused, gaping through the walls of a tumbling shack not far behind it; across the sandy road the store-keeper made his home; wide fields of poor soil

stretched opposite him; and in the last angle of the crossing roads stood a huge chestnut, whose mighty branches sheltered the patient beasts while their masters loitered within the store or on the benches of its porch. For the people still gathered there for tidings as they had once come for letters and supplies; though the shelves were well-nigh empty and the counters barren, the store was yet a meeting-place for those too old, too young, or too afflicted to be marching with the regiments.

When we heard that a great battle had been fought we went for days with hushed lips and quaking hearts; who might be widowed? who childless? We besieged The Ordinary with eager questionings. Then after a great slaughter a list of dead and wounded sent by some pitying hand was tacked on the gray trunk of the old tree. Those branches had seen Indian warfare, tribe against tribe, had seen the scalping of the white man, and heard the savage's death-cry, yet never had they seen so dire a picture as that of which that paper — white for glad-

ness, marked black as if for death — told the tale. That writing saved much — the question it choked one to ask, the answer the hearer dreaded to speak. Each learned his own tidings there; after that, the word of gossip and cheer or mutual forebodings, or the homeward way.

We went every day, Dick or I; but oftenest the duty was mine. I could not wait at home while perhaps a tale which it would break my heart to hear was whispered under those chestnut leaves. What others knew, I also must know. So for many a day I rode out along the road carpeted thick with brown pine-needles, across the sparkling stream which spread into a flower-bedecked swamp between low hills, up the clayey slope beyond, along the sandy stretch — the horse loping her fastest, my heart beating to suffocation — we were almost there. Then slowly back again, pausing at the brook for the horse to dip her hot muzzle in the clear water, and blow rippling rings of satisfaction over its sparkling surface while I sat stilled to attunement with the song the

stream sang, the note the bird trilled from a bush; for my heart beat "Thank God!" There had been no writing there which blotted out my sunshine.

But the others whom I saw! Once when I drew rein close by the huge trunk, ran down the list with devouring eyes, when my breath came easily and my blood ceased its pounding, I sat for an instant with my unseeing eyes fixed on the sandy road running straight between the fields ahead; I became aware of a woman driving straight down the way as anxiously as I had come. The wagon in which she rode was old and rattling, a paintless Jersey with an uncushioned seat; the woman slid and jolted upon it as she leaned forward to slash the horse with the ends of the rope-reins. I knew her. I drew my horse close to the tree and waited, so she could not see; I was between her and any writing there.

She pushed back her sun-bonnet as she reined up beside me. "I cyarnt read,"— I had not thought of that,— "what 's the names thar?"

"There are no dead," I breathed.

"What's thar?" It was a command. I recalled even then her humility and her shrinking whenever I had before seen her.

"They are the wounded, only the wounded."

"What's thar?"

"A battle has been fought near Richmond, and the wounded have been taken into the city, I know; they always are. There are hospitals, nurses, everything." I rattled it breathlessly. The few loungers on the porch eyed us curiously, and I dreaded lest one might cross to us. "Every woman there is a nurse, everything that can be done for a man is done."

"Quit foolin'!" The old eyes flashed. "Read me the names."

"Henry Grimes!

"Joe West!

"Luke Groom!—"

The reins fell from her old hands, she slid from her seat, her bonnet tilted over her face,—it was her son.

I rode home in an agony of sympathy and fear. I sprang from the saddle and

rushed up the path into the hall where father sat too frightened for the second to move. "Is Robert dead?" he gasped.

"No! no!" I cried. "But who knows when he may be; that he is not now, and we have not even heard it?"

I wrung my hands and stumbled over my long riding-skirt as I walked up and down the hall.

"Sit down! What is the matter?" Father brought down his chair from its tilting against the wall, and his face was still the hue of the whitewash behind him.

"I cannot stand it, I cannot!" The cry had been in my heart since that day when first the booming of the gunboats' cannon had sounded.

"Sit down!" father repeated so imperiously that I flung myself into the low flag chair near the door.

"Father," I cried abruptly, "teach me to pray."

"To pray!" He could but repeat it as he looked at me in bewilderment. The furrow of anxiety deepened between his

brows. He could not know that I had at last blurted out the ferment of a spirit which would be no longer controlled.

"I must know — to pray for Robert."

"Have you not done so?" with stern horror.

"As I could, as I know how! There must be more. There must be comfort, peace, strength. I have begged, besought — what is it?"

"Your mother taught you — "

"A prayer for my own safety, for God's care as I slept. It is not in sleep alone that I wish to be guarded. I am awake, alive. How am I to live — with Robert — "

Father's blue eyes flashed. "Live! Doing your duty!"

"What is it?"

"It's not that," pointing to me where I sat huddled in the chair. "I told you before there are no cowards — "

"I am no coward!" Again I vowed it. In tension too strong for speech we sat looking at one another's faces. Father's stern expression changed in an instant.

"My child!" he cried softly, pityingly; then after another silence, "Teach you to pray? I don't know how."

He lifted his hands and stopped me as I started to speak. "There are two kinds of prayer, two kinds of men; I have never been the praying sort. I have done the best I could. I have prayed with my hands and my brain, if I have prayed at all. The rest I have left with the Almighty. He gave the duties; I fulfilled them. The result is in His hands."

That creed might suffice for a strong, full life, but mine was empty. I must leave all to that Deity who rules the universe; I must do it perforce; but I must learn to do it in that way which lays an agony down and takes up life, else my own were broken forever and irretrievably. How could it be done?

"Did you ever feel there was something you must have, beg for, beseech?"

"No, all I ever could have in this life I had — till Lucy died. I knew there was nothing on earth could satisfy that want. I must endure it."

His face was as drawn as mine must have been as he stared past me. "Lucy," he said, after a second of miserable silence, "I have never told you of your mother, how she died."

"I know," I cried quickly.

"From the servants, from others; but I have never told you. She was the loveliest woman I ever saw, the sweetest; I thank God now that she was my wife. Sometimes even yet I can see her when I wake suddenly in the night, in the morning, before consciousness comes to me — Well! you remember how frail she looked, slender? There is nothing she looked like, no one. God only knows how I loved her — how I love her.

"There was just one thing we disagreed about. She was afraid of horses. The one I gave her, the only one she would have — I would as soon have driven a cow. And mine! She would never say a word when she got in the buggy with me, nor clutch at me, no matter how scared she was, she knew how I hated it; but her cheek would

turn white, and sometimes when I had lifted her down from the carriage I saw her little hand red, a furrow pressed deep into her palm where she had held on to the side nearest her. I used to laugh and tease her. I thought it the best way, and that she would overcome her fearfulness.

"Those horses she was most afraid of,— those bays; they had been bred on the place; I had broken them myself. They could n't be matched in that county, nor the next. I had to drive out to the store one night, and I wanted to take her with me. It was warm, moonlight; a beautiful night. I can see just how she looked when I asked her to go. She did n't want to say no, but she was afraid. She looked at me, and then out at that pair pawing by the gate; but she picked up her little white shawl and threw it around her shoulders. Her dress was white, too, and low; and her neck—

"God! it is enough to live sometimes. It was enough then. It was June. The grape blossoms and chestnut blooms were out; the woods were full of the smell of them. We

drove out, turned back again; it was glorious. I let the horses out and they spanked it; the buggy cutting along as smooth as a rocking-chair till we got to the corduroy road. That fretted them. I had to keep them to a walk, and they were wild to go. When we struck the lane they were off like the wind, heads down and tugging at the reins. I laughed at them, but Lucy clung to me. She had never done it before. Then out of the fence corner stumbled a stupid calf. They were off. I pulled and sawed, but could not stop them. We were nearly at the gate. 'Thank God,' I said to myself, 'the gate is open.' I had told Sam to open it and leave it so. Some fool had shut it. I could n't see, the tree shaded it so, till we were right against it; and they — they leaped to jump it!"

He got up, walked up and down, his crutch ringing on the bare floor. "Her head struck the root of the big walnut," he added simply.

There was never a word of himself, his broken leg, his agony of mind and body. He had spoken truly — there were no cowards in our race.

XII

THE rest of that story I had heard from 'Zekiel; he had told it to me many times.

"An' thar Marse Willum he was tied to de chair; did n't nobody know if he ebbah would walk no mo'; and Miss Lucy daid; an' you a-trottin' 'bout de house cryin' fer yo' ma. Lan'! but we had a time dem days! de niggahs dey would n't 'tend to nuthin' nohow, an' eberyt'ing seem lak it goin' to rack an' ruin spipindicular. I done tole Marse Willum 'bout it, I done tole him; an' he sigh an tuhn erroun' in his chair lak he ain't gwine notice nuthin' nebber no mo' in dis worl'. Den I ups an' speaks to him one day sho 'nuff. 'Marse Willum,' I says, 'Miss Lucy she 's done daid an' she lef' you her chile to pervide fer; an' if you don't look mighty sharper dan you's doin' now you's gwine come out lackin'. Ain't nuthin' gwine

right on dis place; de niggahs look lak dey's clean 'stracted; de craps ain't gwine ermount to a row o' pins; dyar ain't gwine be corn ernuff to feed de niggahs wid, much less de hosses an' de cows.'

"'What's dat?' he say, sharp lak.

"'Dat it ain't,' I 'sponded, 'an' de wheat was plum ruined in de harves', an'' —

"'Sen' Charles hyar.'

"Lawd knows I did n't know what he was 'bout, but I seed he was roused up, an' I went erlong. By and by Charles he came runnin' out de house an' he fell to workin' in de cyarpenter's shop lak he was nigh 'pon gone crazy; an' I go 'long. 'Praise Gawd, Marse Willum is awakin' up,' says I. But de Lawd knows I nebbah hoped to see what I did. De very nex' day Marse Willum come hobblin' to de barn on de crutch Charles done made. I was busy dyar cleanin' out de stables, an' when I looks up an' sees him standin' right befo' me de pitchfork drap right out o' my han'. 'Lawd,' says I, 'my time done come!' 'case I thought 't was a sperrit, you see. An' den he say — de very

fus' word he say is, 'Whar is dat roan colt?' An' I say wid my knees a-shakin' lak dey gwine knock tergedder spite o' all I could do, 'Jo got him, sah.'

"'What in thunder is he doing with him?'

"I stood up straight den, an' my knees stiffened up good under me. 'T warnt no ghos' gwine swear lak Marse Willum swear when I tell him Jo 's tryin' to break dat colt down in de fiel'.

"'Tell him to come hyar.'

"I tell you, sah, I went.

"Jo he was off dat colt's neck in de shake o' a daid sheep's tail, an' he was glad ernuff to come off, too, for it sho was hard to stick on; he come a-runnin' 'long up wid de halter in his han' an' de colt cavortin' an' pawin' after him, yukkin' de halter nigh 'pon out Jo's han's.

"'You idjit!' Marse Willum shouted out, 'bring him here.'

"Den I seed what Marse Willum was after. I tried to say sumpin', but my tongue jes dried up in my mouf I was so scared, an' little red an' black things got a-dancin' befo'

my eyes. When I could see good an' clear dyar was Marse Willum on dat colt, an' dat colt was a-cavortin' an' a-pawin' up de earth; but Marse Willum he set good an' straight an' tight as ebbah. 'Glory Hallelujah!' says I. 'Glory Hallelujah!' I says it ergin when he come ridin' dat colt down de fiel' jes as easy an' peaceable! He sort o' laughed when he heard me shout out, an' he pull de colt up on de uddah side of de fence whar I was a-leanin'. His cheek is all done flushed up an' his eyes bright, but de win' done blow his hat off back dyar in de fiel', an' his hair done blow back on his haid, an' I seed dat undah de topmos' locks it 's all tuhn white.

"Marse Willum he draw a long breath. 'Gimme my crutch,' he says. An' I picked it up from whar it done drap when he clum on dat colt's back somehow; I picked it up an' han's it to him an' holp him down.

"'Marse Willum done come back to hise'f,' I say dat day mo' dan once, 'but he 's had a huht he 'll nebbah git ober. Dyar 's a huht in his body an' a huht in his heart, an' neider will nebbah be mended.'"

XIII

THERE is an uplift to any life when it touches a brave one. Those who have suffered and overcome, who have found that sorrow means the extinction neither of life nor of happiness, should not hide forever their knowledge behind locked lips. An hour will come when another's eyes will need to see the shine of that gold which sorrow has purified. Father had divined that that hour had come to me, and he had shown me his agony. I knew how he had borne it. If he could not teach me prayer, he could teach me life.

I went back over his story piecing it with 'Zekiel's, and saw, at last, with a woman's understanding, the tale which had fascinated my childhood. I was up in my attic room then, — the chamber had been given up to father, — I had slipped into a cool dress, and as I sat down by the narrow window, my

Bible on the mantel-shelf was just above my hand. I reached up for it, turned its leaves slowly upon my knee, well-known words and phrases flashing up to sight. I had a strange feeling, both of knowing it all and knowing nothing. Were it history, tales of heroes, of journeyings, of law-giving? then I knew it. Were it the birth of Christ, His miracles, His death, the letters of His apostles? still it was familiar.

But were these the surface only, was there through all these pages an essence, a divinity of spirit, showing through all ages, climaxing in God's son, coming close to us as it had to Christ, giving us light and love to live by as it had given Him? then I knew nothing. I had but guessed by glimmerings.

I had never been devout. I had sat for many a Sabbath in the old church while the preacher's words drifted over my head; and if I had felt attuned to worship by the quietude, by the monotonous voice sounding from the pulpit, it was not to give homage to that Deity the preacher pictured, but He whose handiwork of green grass and hoary trees

and blue skies shone through the dusty windows.

How close He seemed to some! how far-off to me! How devoutly Mammy and those of her kind worshipped Him! But their God was a fiery and wrathful King. The God of my father was a benignant Deity. Their cold abstractions would not serve for me: I was too vitally alive. The tale I had vaguely and dreamily read in the rhythmic pulse of nature, in the laws of my own being, pointed to a brotherhood unfathomable, a fatherhood unlimitable; and suddenly my half-formed surmisings had been rent like a rotten fabric. I must know.

For that hour and many another I sat there questioning, reading, praying, — learning. The swallows whirled in wide circles, their graceful flight etching dark curves against the evening sky, the chimney cast a breadth of shadow across the grass. Green grass, twittering birds, the sunset sky! God wrote once upon a household wall for one man's warning; He writes forever anew, before all men's eyes, a tale of love.

But I was set first to learn father's creed of work. He declared that he must go next morning to Bellevue. I urged the dangers, but he would not listen. He must see what damage had been done, do what he could to straighten affairs, and look after the comfort of those left. By sunrise he was gone.

It was a day of heavenly quiet. The crisp autumn air stirred one's blood, the sunshine lay warm on fields that had been already harvested. 'Zekiel in the ox-cart was hauling fodder to the barn; his "haws" and cries, the crackings of his whip, were the only sounds except the low cluckings of the fowls or Mammy's footsteps and my own. But despite the day, its calm, its brightness, I was uneasy. It was the first day father had left me. Busied as I kept myself, I felt a tingle of fear, due perhaps to father's absence and the cause of it; and at noon I could endure it no longer. I must know if there were any news, so I sent Dick along the path through the woods to The Ordinary, and, strive as I might against it, I kept an anxious watch across the fields. Still I did

not see Dick, nor hear him, till he stumbled across the doorstep and cried my name.

I ran down from my room and Mammy came racing from the kitchen. "What in the world is the matter?"

"De sojers, de sojers!"

"What in de name o' Gawd is you aftah anyhow?"

"De sojers! Dey 's at de On'ry, dey 's comin' hyar!"

"The idea!" I never feared it for a moment; I did not believe it even then. We were too far back in the woods, the forest shut us in too completely. We thought ourselves entirely secure.

"'Clare 'fo' Gawd," Dick insisted, the tears rolling down his cheeks; "dey 's a-comin' straight hyar."

"How you know?" demanded Mammy.

"Dey 's done smash up eberything lef' at de stoah, an' dey 's swarmin' lak bees." Dick sat panting on the doorstep; his words grew with his returning breath.

"I seed 'em. I was 'bleeged to watch 'em. I lean ergainst de fence cornder whar de path

come 'long by Marse Tom's gyarden —" "Marse Tom" was the store-keeper, a man too old for active service. "Dey was a-swearin' an' a-laughin'; an' one man he was jes a-struttin' up an' down wid a piece o' yaller caliker hangin' down his back, an' pigeon-toein' jes lak he say, 'Step light, ladies!' an' ebery-thing dat was lef' o' Marse Tom's stoah a-burnin' in de road. Marse Tom he sat dyar in de house, in de hall, his haid in his han's. Bimeby he raise up an' look out, an' he seed me scrunched up in de fence cornder, an' he do so."

Dick sat up straight and awed; he beckoned solemnly with his forefinger.

"When I done come up to de do' he say, 'Whar 's yo' Marse Willum?' an' I done tole him. Den he groan an' shake his haid. 'You put out fer home,' he say, 'an' don't you walk nary step o' de way, but run lak de Ole Scratch was a-jumpin' behin' you. Tell Miss Lucy dey 's comin' dyar nex'.'"

"My Gawd!" moaned Mammy.

"Hush!" I commanded impatiently, "you know they won't bother us."

"Marse Tom say you run an' hide ebery las' thing you got, or you nebbah will lay eyes on it ergin. He say dey 's suttenly comin'. He say dey 's gwine in ebery las' gate on de road."

I waited for no more. I fled toward the barn, where I found 'Zekiel standing on a load of fodder pitching it up into the loft. "The soldiers are coming!" I cried, "run the horses off into the woods; hide them anywhere." He was loosening the oxen before I finished; in one instant he was astride of the horse we had kept up in the stall and was driving off the cattle before him. I ran back to the house. "Whar is de res' o' de silvah? Git yo' dresses!" Mammy rushed through the rooms gathering up all arms and apron could hold. "Git yo' clo'es, Miss Lucy; does you want to go naked de res' o' dis wintah? Honey, why don't you do something?"

I could not believe those preparations necessary, and lent little aid.

"Ise got yo' plaid silk an' yo' flowered dimity. Come 'long, Dick."

In five minutes she was back again. "Gimme some mo' things. Lan'! 't is too late! Dick, go hide yo'se'f somewhars quick! Dey 's done got one chile, dey ain't gwine cotch anudder. Lawd! what is we gwine do? Run upstairs, Miss Lucy, quick!"

I stood immovable and resolute. I was ready to meet them with perfect dignity at my own fireside.

"You hear me!" She caught hold of my shoulders from behind, pushing me forward. "I done promised Marse Robert Ise gwine tek cyar o' you, an' Ise gwine do it." She had pushed me to the front of the stairs while the blue-coats raced down the lane. Then she begged: "Go 'long, chile, dyar ain't nobody hyar but you an' one po' niggah."

I yielded. As I put my foot on the stair the first soldier swung himself from his horse outside the gate. "Shut de do', an' pull de latchstring inside," cried Mammy; and then all the sounds of pandemonium broke out within and without our little home.

"Not one step!" I heard Mammy's voice

ring out above the din; "you ain't gwine up dem stairs nary step. Take yo'se'f 'long off!"

"Go along, old woman! What you got up there?" and then a boisterous laugh.

"Nuthin' but one po' lone white 'oman."

"We want to see her."

"You done done mischief ernuff fer one time," Mammy accused.

The men roared. "What 's your name anyhow?" one of them chaffed.

"Maria Yancey."

"I vow! Is n't that the name?" he called.

"That 's it," came the loud answer. "Have you got a son named Sam?"

"Dat I is, lessen you —"

"He 's sick."

"Whar?"

"At the fort."

"What you done done to him?"

"Better say what 's he done to us;" a shout of laughter rolled through the hall and echoed up the stair.

"What 's he done?" demanded Mammy, belligerently.

"He 's cook," said one, in a dry tone.

"Humph!" Mammy grunted, "he could n't cook a hoecake."

"We 're learning him." Again the roar of laughter.

"Don't you do nuthin' to my boy Sam."

"All we are doing now," said a sober voice, "is to give him some medicine. Get out of the way."

I stood behind the closed door. From the very first my blood had boiled at the idea of shutting myself in there and leaving Mammy to face them alone. I had my fingers on the latch when some one pushed her aside, and a heavy step bounded by her. Mammy ran after the intruder, passed him, flung herself against my door, the boards groaning and trembling as she leaned her weight against them.

I stood on the other side, my cheeks hot, my hands clenched at my side, feeling a coward through and through. Then I heard a cry, an oath; and from the exclamations that followed them, I knew that the flag, so carefully hidden, had been found. At the thought every fear fled. I was icy from

head to foot, but I felt clad with immunity. I flung open the door, pushed Mammy aside, and stood squarely in the path of light the window behind me threw in the passage. The men bent over the plunder looked up, rose to their feet; and a soldier running up the stair stood pressed against the wall. So we gazed at one another.

"Where is your officer?" I demanded of the man who held the trailing bunting.

"In the hall."

"Take that to him." I turned to go down the stair, but Mammy caught at my dress. "Miss Lucy, Miss Lucy!" she begged.

I loosened her clutch without looking at her. "Let me pass!" I commanded both her and the soldier on the stair; and I went down, my skirts swishing against his knees, as calmly as if it had been a summer's Sabbath and I walked up the aisle of the old church.

In the hall I came face to face with the officer, who had just arrived. He doffed his cap; I looked at him steadily. "Are you the officer in command?"

"I am."

As he spoke the men came up behind me, spread the gay flag upon the floor; stars and stripes and bright background flaunted up from the bare pine-boards.

"And you have permitted this?" I glanced to neither right nor left, but I knew, and so did he, that the chamber floor was strewn with garments rifled from bureau and closet; that an acrid smell of burning wool and cotton thrown upon the fire filled the house; that the door of the china press, found locked, sagged on its wrenched hinges, and broken china strewed the floor.

"I have just come," said the officer, angrily. "I—" He broke off as if he disdained to defend himself. "Where did you find this?" he demanded of the men with haughty emphasis.

I gave them no chance to reply. "In my attic, safely hidden from—" I paused to give the word emphasis—"disgrace." I stopped him before he could speak. "I saved it from trampling footsteps. My grandfather fought for it, my great-grandfather.

I could not see — I thought to see it underfoot would be a disgrace. I was mistaken. It is this."

The man's glance followed mine from rifled room to rifled room, out to our wagon loaded with corn from our crib, a slaughtered cow a-top of it with legs pointing ghastly upward.

"We are compelled to find provisions," he said shortly.

"By robbing helpless women?"

"Madam," said the man, stung beyond endurance, "you say you love that flag, own allegiance to it — "

"My husband fights beneath another."

His eyes flashed. "Roll it up, put it on the wagon," he commanded.

"Yes, take it," said I, speaking low and intensely; "I can no longer protect it."

If looks could have killed, I should have fallen then. "Madam," — the man could scarcely speak, he was so choked with anger, — "madam, we will have our flag, but nothing else belonging to you."

"No?"

"Nothing which we cannot claim rightfully." He thrust his hands into his pockets, and drew out a wallet filled with gold. I stood watching him, his keen glances of estimation, his counting. "This is full value." He held out the money toward me. I stood chin in air, hands clasped behind me. Mammy nudged me, — she had stolen close up beside me, — and the man looked from me to her, put down the gold on the bench of the spinning-wheel, and strode away.

Mammy grabbed at it; I waved her away, took it in my hand, walked to the door where stood a group of wondering men watching first me and then the officer, who had reached the wagon and was inspecting it. His back was toward us. From the doorstep I flung the gold abroad as I would have scattered corn to hungry fowls. There was quick and hasty ducking, some knocking of heads; but when the officer turned I stood disdainful at the door, the men were gone, Mammy stood by my side. "Chile, chile," she besought, "'t ain't no use to stan' hyar; dat man 's fairly a-bilin ober now; you need n't say no

mo'. Come 'long!" I went slowly into the chamber.

The officer found me there; his quick glance had shown him that the money was gone, and he doubtless thought me appeased.

"Is there anything more I can do for you?"

I smiled at the "more." "No," I answered curtly. I was cold and shivering; already the reaction had begun.

"Miss Lucy," begged Mammy, in a whisper, "I wants to see my boy."

"This woman," said I then, "wants to see her son, Sam Yancey. He is at the fort."

"I know; sick."

"Sam allus was a sickly chile; he don't know nuthin' 'tall 'bout wuk."

"So we have found," — gravely.

"His spells is ter'ble bad."

"This one is."

"Seem lak he 'll die sometimes," quavered Mammy, "lessen somebody 's right dyar dat knows what to do fer him."

"He asked if we could get you a message. He wants you to come to see him."

"At dat place!" Mammy shrank back.

The officer glared. "Do you want to come?"

"Ef Miss Lucy will come wid me."

"Will it be safe?" I asked.

"With my pass, yes!" he assured me haughtily.

"You will give it?"

For answer he took an envelope from his pocket, tore off the unmarked side, scribbled a few words upon it, and handed it to me. In spite of the ruin about me, of the accountability in which I held this man, my mood toward him softened.

"Thank you," I said in a low voice.

He shot me a keen glance, saw that the paper in my hand shook like a leaf in the wind, then strode to the door, and closed it behind him, and in a moment we heard his command to horse ring out sharp and clear.

I stood watching them, straining my eyes after the flying figures until there was nothing to be seen but the empty road and the encircling pines. Mammy sobbed by the hearth.

"Hush!" I commanded. "There is no use in crying."

"Miss Lucy, my Lawd! You ain't got—"

"I will see what I have got left." I felt the throb of soldierly blood in my veins. "Where is Dick?"

"I ain't seen him." She shrieked his name out into the yard till the door of the low hen-house opened and Dick showed an ashy face at the opening. She ran to him while I went to meet 'Zekiel.

"I done saved de horses, ebery las' one," he called out. "An' de cows an' oxen, too, all 'cep' dat contrary cow what I had to leab behin', an' she come strollin' 'long up by de barn same lak she want to show herse'f off." 'Zekiel had gotten up to the gate where I waited for him.

"I done it jes as easy," he boasted excitedly; "yas, sah! I had done carried dem off to de woods an' come back. I could n't stay down dyar wid 'em when you alls was up hyar by yo'se'ves; but I did n't git no closer to de house dan de barn, fer dat 's whar dey cotch me; an' de fus' word

dey say to me dey 'low, 'Whar 's de hosses?' an' I say jes as solemn lak, —" Daddy rolled up the whites of his eyes and puckered up his mouth, —"I says, 'We ain't got nary Gawd-forsaken one.' 'Dat 's a lie,' says one. An' I says, 'Fo' Gawd, ef you 'll go down dyar to de top o' dat gully beyon' de barn you 'll see de bones o' de las' one dat 's died.' An' you know, Miss Lucy, de bones o' dat ole one dat died las' spring is a-layin' dyar yit.

"Dey fotch a lot o' grumblin' arter dat, but dey hitches dyar own hosses to de wagon, I seen dat, an' dey ain't nose 'round aftah ours no mo'."

"Well," said I, "I am mighty glad they are safe; but I am sorry you had to tell a story about it."

"A story!" indignantly; "did you ever hear me tell anything but de truf in all yo' bohn days?"

"What was it, then?" I asked a trifle sharply.

"De-Lawd-a-mussy!" in a tone of pitying reproach. "Don't you know Marse

Robert ain't got a single horse on de place?"

"There are two."

"An' dem's mares, bofe on 'em. Tellin' me 'bout tellin' de truf!"

I had to laugh, and 'Zekiel listened delightedly. "I suttenly is glad to hear you; laugh jes' as much as you can. We'se got de Ole Boy to contend wid now, an' don't nuthin' put him out lak a good laugh. Whar dyar's frowns an' grumbles, dyar he is; but when fokses takes to laughin' — um! he switches his tail an' hoofs it. Miss Lucy, I want you to see how dey is done cleaned us out."

It was true. Our crops had been good that year, and we had had plenty and to spare; now we were as poor as the poorest. We came up from the barn, heavy of foot and of heart, as the dusk was thickening over the fields; and we saw a figure, indistinct in the twilight, hastening toward us along the path. I knew her on the instant, but I did not hurry, though she ran, stumbling along the rough way over the corn furrows.

"Emily!" I said calmly when she flung her arms about me.

"Poor child! poor child!" she cried.

Mammy bespoke a welcome for me. "Miss Em'ly! Miss Em'ly! you is welcome as de angils."

"Did you drop out of the sky?" I asked foolishly, and felt the tense muscles about my mouth relax at the question.

Emily lifted her head from my shoulder, and slipped her arm from my neck to my waist. "I started here this morning," she began. "I got as far as the Dragon and I heard the soldiers were at The Ordinary. We turned in at Oakleigh. They wanted me to stay. I was afraid to come on, but I was wild with anxiety about you. When I said I would come anyhow they made me start on horseback, one of the darkies with me, so that we could hide in the woods, if necessary. At The Ordinary I heard — The darkey was scared to death. I sent him home with the horses while I started through the woods. Mercy, how scared I was! I am such a coward, you know."

What she had done savored of it! "I was frightened at every sound, every rustling leaf or snapping twig. When I got to the edge of the woods I was afraid to come another step until I saw you."

Mammy had hastened before us. "Come 'long in," she called from the doorstep. "Lawd knows, Miss Em'ly, but you 's welcome as de angils!" she repeated.

"Perhaps I am an angel," said Emily demurely, as she felt in the pocket of her gown, drew out something white and stiff and rustling, and thrust it into my hand. I looked down upon a letter with Robert's writing upon it.

I ran into the chamber, knelt by the light, and devoured the words while Mammy punched the logs till they blazed brighter; and she and Emily talked in low tones as I turned the full, well-written pages which told me what I most longed to know. Robert was safe and well. He acknowledged his wants, but to make light of them; he wrote of worn clothes and of hunger, but with a jest; he couched his loving thoughts of us

in such warm words that I felt as if I touched a ripple of that current which flowed from me to him, from him to me, no matter how many miles might stretch between. When I had finished I looked at mud-betrampled floor and empty wardrobe, remembered rifled smokehouse and barn, — and laughed.

"Robert is safe," I cried from my seat on the rug. "So long as he is, all is well; I care for nothing else!"

"Ah!" said Emily with a long-drawn breath and a quick look of pain. I suddenly remembered; I dared not ask of Henry.

XIV

SO it was that I could make a jest of our misfortunes, and laugh at our losses till Mammy had gone to her cabin, night had settled down, and we were alone in the house; then I grew sober. The wind of a gathering storm grew stronger and howled about the chimneys and clashed together the bare branches of the cherry tree. It came in long, whistling breaths; and, maddening in their intensity, the cattle, driven up from their hiding-place to the shelter of the barn, scented the fresh-spilled blood, and lifted their heads for the piteous moans which set us a-shiver as they drifted down the currents of the air to come echoing back thrilling with anger, fear, despair.

While we shrank from it we heard the sting of rain against the window-pane, — a wind-driven rain that struck like shot against the glass. I piled the wood on the

andirons, brought the candle-stand from its resting-place against the wall, and felt with trembling fingers for the wooden button which would hold the lowered top level and true. I lighted a candle and placed it there, and another on the mantel-piece, yet in all that glow of candle-light and firelight fear struck through us. Our chairs rocked closer together; we were touching each other; Emily's hand groped for mine and held it. A great gust of wind howled about the house, shook at the doors, and brought the rain splashing against the windows. I could not resist a fearful, searching look around the bright, familiar room, but when I looked I sprang shrieking to my feet. Pressed against the glass outside, looking in on us, was a man's face.

I threw Emily to the floor as I sprang up; she stumbled to her feet, brushed the down-tumbled hair from her eyes, and looked where I still pointed with outstretched hand.

"Oh!" But it was a cry of gladness. She ran out in the hall, I after her; her hands were on the heavy bar fastening the door.

"What are you doing?" I demanded fiercely as I struggled with her. "Are you crazy?"

"Are you?" She pulled at the bar, but my hands held hers down. "Let go!" she cried, "it's Henry!"

I fell back against the wall, limp from the reaction, while Emily wrenched open the door and ran out into the darkness. The storm roared through the hall as I stumbled back to the stair and sat down on the first low step. When they entered their figures were like one in the darkness, and when they came into the light streaming from the chamber, her eyes were as bright as the raindrops on her hair.

They found me and carried me between them back to the fire, where Henry knelt before me chafing my hands and wrists as Robert might have done; but his glance went over my head to Emily leaning against my chair, and had it been Robert — suddenly I remembered that Henry must have seen him, could tell me a hundred things I longed to know. I asked an eager question, another, a

dozen; and Henry, answering, told the very things I thirsted to hear. I forgot the fright, the day, — all but the blessed news I listened to. As he talked Emily slipped into her chair beside me, and Henry — spoiled fellow that he was — sat at her feet instead of kneeling before mine, laid his hand a second on her knee, and looked up into her face with an expression I had never dreamed to see. Haughty, indolent, ease-loving as was his nature, he was now alert, wistful, pleading, — all in one breath.

His soft, wide hat lay on the floor where he had flung it, the capes of his coat hung loosely upon his shoulders; his thin, dark, eager face shone in the firelight.

As I looked at them, in spite of my love for both, something of jealousy — not of them, but of their happiness — some cold feeling crept over me. "You had better take off your coat," I cautioned, a tinge of sarcasm in my tone; "Emily's dress will be ruined."

"As if she cared for that!" he said with a laugh.

"It will be hard enough to get a new one," she assured him saucily; "be careful."

I made some excuse, slipped from the chamber, and sped up the narrow stair. A deadly chill was in the air of the attic chamber. My fingers trembled as I lighted the pine knots, and the spluttering flames flared over the logs above them. I knelt watching them, and though I thought of nothing definitely, yet I was conscious of everything, — that day, each hour of it, careless or bitter or desperate, — of every event of my life. All seemed pulsing at once about a centre which was my slim self shaken with their vibrations. I was oblivious of storm without and merry voices below until the outer door shook with heavy pounding, and the shouting of my name rang above the beating of the wind and rain. It was father.

"Are you safe?" he cried the moment he spied me.

"Safe as a church," called Henry cheerily.

"Who is here?" father demanded quickly.

"Why, I, sir!" Henry seized his hand on one side while Emily stole up to the other.

"Were you here?" was father's amazed cry. I could see the faint look of amusement on Henry's face as he answered, "No!"

"Nor Emily? no one? To think I was not at home!"

"Perhaps it is as well that you were not."

"Why?" — curt and sharp.

"You might be spending to-night at the fort."

Father turned hastily away. "No," in answer to my pleading that he should take off his coat. "Where is Dick? — abed, I suppose."

"I will see." But Henry was before me. A beam of light streamed from Mammy's window; the terrors of night and day kept them wide-eyed and hugging the comfort of light and warmth.

We looked for a torrent of execration from father; he had not a word to say. He cut Mammy short when she hurried in with lamentations, and bade her go to bed and keep her senses. He gave Dick and 'Zekiel strict orders about the care of his horse, which he had ridden mercilessly; then he sat by the

fire, the steam of his wet clothes enveloping him. He would soon be going to bed, he declared, and it was useless to change them; and there he sat, gazing straight ahead, his lips pressed in firm lines, his muscles tense, his eyes flashing when he turned to look at me. In an hour he sent us up to the attic; he would share his bed with Henry.

If I had held any hope of sleep when we went up to my room under the roof it was soon dissipated.

In the low bed pushed close under the eaves, the quilts tucked warmly beneath our chins, our eyes on the flickering flames which first flared up and lighted all the little room, then died to leave it eerie and dusky, while the furniture snapped weirdly as the heat lessened and the cold stole in, with the storm howling outside and the rain rattling upon the shingles close overhead, — Emily must tell the tale of her quarrel with Henry.

I was wide-awake, but striving to straighten the thoughts of the day, to bring them into some sort of order so that my memory could shut the door upon them, and the blessed

oblivion of sleep could blot them out of sight, soften their rugged outlines till they would not cut deeply when taken up on the morrow, when Emily asked a question:

"You remember Jack Martin?"

"Yes." I did not want to talk; I answered as curtly as possible.

"You know I never could bear him?"

"Yes," once more, and perhaps a trifle resentfully. Beside the things of which I thought, Emily's likes and dislikes seemed trivial.

"Perhaps I showed it too plainly. You used to tell me so sometimes, you remember?"

"I remember." The chorus was faint. I did not then know that she wished to tell me all the story that night, and I longed to be left to myself.

But, of course, I remembered Jack Martin. He was one of the young men forever at Emily's house or hanging around her when abroad; and there was no good in him — so I had thought and warned her. I was both right and wrong.

"Well, I never thought —" She paused for a long, tantalizing moment. I knew Emily; I realized now that she would talk till she had said all she wanted to, so I prodded her gently with my elbow when she had kept too long silent.

She picked up the thread of her story. "You know Henry and I — well, you know —"

"I suppose I do," shortly.

She giggled under the bed-clothes. "I never thought anything about his coming to the house — Jack, you know — or — anything else. It is n't always because a man is in love with a girl that he visits her house; half the time it 's the people he meets, the good times he has." Emily was notorious for keeping every man in the neighborhood around her. Her mother told a pathetic tale now and then of "No room left to hitch another single horse at the palings, and not another chair to be found to be put to the supper table" on Sundays. "I always said so; but Jack — Pshaw! I 'll just have to tell you straight along."

"I wish to heaven you would."

"You need n't be cross about it. Well, one day Jack was coming down to our house and he stopped by the store. He went in for something, and then he thought he would get our mail and bring it to us. He got the papers and the letters — two or three there were, and one for me. He knew the writing on mine — it was Henry's." Another long pause.

"We had had a quarrel; we will never have another."

"Hm!" Emily's and Henry's fallings-out were numbered by the score.

"Never! We will never forget this one. Why, it has been a year and a half since — since —"

"I know." And then we laughed softly, like the silly girls we were.

"I had vowed I would never make the slightest effort to make this one up," Emily went on. "I had had to sometimes." In that careless, indolent fashion of his, Henry was both imperious and self-willed.

"It had lasted a week, that — ah — mis-

understanding, when Henry sat down and wrote me a long letter. That was the one Jack got. He tore it up."

"The rascal!"

"Hush! He is dead!"

"How do you know?" I asked in awe-stricken tones.

"He died three days ago. He was wounded, you know." I had seen his name on that fatal list upon the chestnut. "He was in one of the hospitals of Richmond. He knew Henry was in the city, and he sent for him. When Henry went to him —" Emily's voice sank very low, its clear, gentle tones beat against the loud and wrathful voices of the night.

"Henry says that it was dreadful. Jack told him that he had loved me, that he knew it was senseless, but he could n't keep away."

"What did I tell you?"

"That he knew Henry and I had quarrelled, and when he had that letter inside his pocket he almost knew the words written in it. He kept thinking, he said, 'Suppose she does n't get it?' and then he began to imagine what

might happen; as if — When he was nearly to the lane, he got off his horse, sat down on that old log under the oak tree, tore the letter to bits, and hid the pieces under the log. That's all.

"Henry went straight to his captain. He told him he had to come home. He was going to stop here to-night, steal over to his mother's, and see me somehow. Do you think there is any danger in his staying here? He is safe?"

"For to-night." I answered grimly. "The lightning has struck. But he had better get away to-morrow."

With my hand under my pillow, touching the precious letter there, I fell asleep.

XV

"HENRY, it is not safe for you to stay in the county a day."

Henry turned lazily in his chair, and looked at father quizzically.

"You had better try and get across the Dragon at once and back into Middlesex."

"I must see my mother first."

"What are you thinking of?"

"Of her."

"Good God! what a fool!"

Henry smiled serenely, stuck out his foot a little nearer to the fire. "Cold, this morning," he commented; "raw too, pretty bad day for a ride."

"What do you expect to do, sir?" father fumed.

"Stay here." A look about the room, at Emily's bright face, at me, at father, bespoke his content with his surroundings.

"You shall not."

"Mr. Yancey, I have never been forbidden your house." Henry's voice was steady, though his eyes twinkled.

"You are not now, you know it; but you can't stay here; you can't. Don't you suppose they know?"

Henry's quick glance showed him Emily's face unchanged from its happy serenity; he looked back at father with a distinct show of relief on his keen, eager face. "You mean do the Yankees know I am here?" he answered lightly. "How could they? I'll risk it anyhow.

"Don't worry, Mr. Yancey," he added, "There 's no chance of my seeing an enemy here to-day. I shall wait till dark, the roads will be safe then. Besides, I could cut through the woods by broad daylight, I know every path of the county; still —"

"You will not."

"You went to Bellevue yesterday," Henry quizzed.

"I am an old man."

"Not so old now," laughed Henry; "they may impress you yet."

"I wish they would," vowed father, with a flash of eagerness.

"They may —" Henry bit back the words it was evident he wished to speak, and flung himself back in the chair with his old manner of happy indifference. "I shall have one day at least," he said contentedly.

"If you stay here Dick shall be posted on horseback at the front gate; your horse shall be kept saddled at the back fence. In case of surprise make for the woods back of us."

"I could not allow you to take such trouble, not for a moment."

"You will have to," said father, shortly, as he fitted his crutch under his arm.

"Mr. Yancey —"

"Father, wait a moment!" I called as his hand was on the latch. "I am going down to Miss Nancy's. We are to carry the silver Mammy saved yesterday, everything that can be spared from what is left, for safe keeping. Henry must go with us, Henry and Emily both."

They questioned each other's eyes. "Of course," cried Emily, gayly.

"Then get ready. I am going directly."

I followed father into the hall, and together we made some hasty plans for the day. "I shall try and keep them there until night," I declared. "Mammy is going with me. We shall both have to come back; she can stay and get your dinner, and Dick will go back with me the second time. If there is any alarm, any news, send 'Zekiel after us."

In half an hour we started. The path was slippery and muddy from the heavy rain of the night. The sky was still clouded and gray, though the blue showed a narrow breadth of promise in the west. Mammy led the line, a bundle of her treasures tied in a gaudy quilt balanced upon her head; her arms were akimbo, her walk a compromise between a waddle and a wrathful stride; her face was grim, determined, her thick lips pressed close together and pursed out, a companion sign of angry determination with the furrows in her fat forehead.

Dick followed with a basket of silver on his arm. His eyes bulged out with fear, yet

the unusual touched his love of excitement, so that he was not altogether miserable. He skipped across slippery furrows, jumped shallow pools; and by and by, forgetting his fright, began to sing under his breath: —

"Possum tail am ringed all 'round,
Raccoon tail am byar;
Ole hyar ain't got no tail at all,
Nuthin' but a patch o' hyar."

"Quit dat foolishness!" called Mammy, scornfully, but she could not turn her head to scare him with a wrathful look, and Dick soon forgot, and began another of his favorites: —

"Ole Molly hyar
What you doin' dyar?"

"Shut yo' black mouf, or I lay I 'll make you!" Mammy snapped, and Dick went quietly.

I could not see Emily nor Henry without turning my head. I had mercifully left them to the rear of the little procession which, under the leaden skies, made its way across the muddy field.

Down in the depths of those dismal, drip-

ping woods was no place for song from even Dick's careless lips. Leaves and pine needles under foot were sodden; the marshy pools were black and overflowing; only Henry and Emily kept up a murmur of conversation behind us. For me, I pushed back my sun-bonnet and drew a breath of relief when we came out in sight of the clearing. I clambered up on top of the fence and waved to Miss Nancy, who had come wondering to the door when the hounds broke into a clamor of barking.

"Land's sakes, it 's Lucy!" she called. "Here, Nick, here! Here, Nero! shut up, will you? Go back!" She threw a stick at them and sent them howling away as she hurried to meet us, holding her short scant skirts up from the wet. Anxiety was in every line of her face; Miss Molly following her was too sober for her good-natured grin.

"Child, I am so glad to see you," Miss Nancy called to me, ignoring for a second the others. "I have been fairly crazy about you. We know. We heard all about it.

They sent us word from Oakleigh; that is," correcting herself primly, "they sent for something and the man told us. Come right on to the house. And if here ain't Emily, and — well, I declare. Come on in. You

ry one of you. I always did
in those woods, once when
where else, and again when
ling off the trees, sliding
least look for it," Miss
as she led the way into
Molly following her like a
adow many times too big;
iss Molly was dumb.
n and make yourselves com-
ant me to take care of these
That I will. Nobody will
here. Poor child!" She
lamentations, but of those I
I never cared half so much for people's sympathy over what had already happened as I did for help in what might come, and I despised being pitied. Let me fight out my sorrows alone; my joys I will gladly share.

I began at once to boast. "I have a letter from Robert."

"You have?" with a look of expectancy.

"I will tell you about it after awhile." And I made the promise a pretext for following her when she went out into the hall.

"Miss Nancy," I whispered, "will it be any trouble to you if we spend the day here?"

"La, no! I should be proud to have you, proud. Can you really stay?" she asked eagerly, her thin little figure tiptoeing forward as if to hear the quicker.

"If we could, if you are sure —"

"Nothing in the world would make us happier, nothing," she avowed, with her quaint manner of repeating a word like a refrain.

I told my plan and the reasons for it, her head nodding to every phrase.

"I 'll call sister Molly and ask her to help."

"Do, and leave those two alone."

"You don't tell me! You don't mean —"

I laughed, and her black eyes twinkled with comprehension.

"I will," she vowed, "that I will. Poor things! When is he going back?"

"He should be on his way now."

"But you know how he must want to stay, now don't you? He will be safe here, yes, indeed. You don't have to go back?"

I told her I must.

"You will be back for dinner, certainly? and I'll leave them there to themselves. Bring your father with you," in an excess of hospitality, for Miss Nancy was genuinely afraid of father's brusqueness. "Tell him not to stay there alone."

"I am going to cook dinner in Sister Molly's house," she whispered at Miss Molly's door; and I was glad to think, as I went back through the sombre woods, of those two alone in that peaceful room.

The sun was setting when we went home; Henry's horse was tied at the gate as he had asked that it should be, but father urged again that the foolhardy venture should not be made.

Henry was happy enough to be careless. "The soldiers are not out of the fort to-day; they are hugging the fires," he declared, as he pulled at his saddle-girth to see if it were carefully buckled.

"Better not risk it."

Emily, close by Henry's side, urged in words which could not be heard, face and manner telling the tale.

"No, I must see mother; then I will be off."

"It is too dangerous, Henry; you know it. Leave a letter for her."

"And tell her her son was within ten miles of her and afraid to come and see her?" His tone was sufficient. "It will soon be dark; I must be off."

He bade us each good-by and came at last to Emily where she leaned against the palings, her eyes glowing and her face gleaming white in the dusk. He looked at her with longing and laughter both in his eyes, then, with a swift look of daring at us, he bent to kiss her and was gone. Red and white — shame and sorrow — chased each other over

Emily's cheek as we watched him canter down the lane, and turn at the pines to wave good-by; we went sorrowfully into the house.

The excitement which had upheld us with its false strength, the cheerfulness we had pretended, the fear we had in reality felt, blent into a common mood of lethargy, a dull torpor which sent us early to bed and fitful dreams, and left listless moments as its heritage, despite the sparkling frost and the cool air and the clear sky of the morrow.

I hugged the fireplace and paid little attention to father, as he rummaged about in the chimney closet and then, after wrapping his big shawl about him, went out; but soon I heard the discordant creaking with which the grindstone under the cherry tree was set to work.

"Dick, you rascal," father fussed, "look out there; be careful! Pour the water in a steady stream; not so much, you numskull!"

I loitered to the window and looked out at them. Dick's hand was unsteady from the cold; his face was ashy, his teeth chatter-

ing. The gourd shook as he tried to hold it at the right angle above the stone and let the water trickle down upon it drop by drop.

I picked up my shawl and ran out. "Here," I cried to the boy, "give it to me. Run along to the kitchen and warm yourself. You look as if you were frozen. What are you doing, father?" I asked, as I stood with gourd poised in air.

He pursed his lips together and bent over the slowly turning stone without a word. The wind softly tossed the thick gray hair on his temples and the fringe of his heavy shawl, and reddened his firm cheek; his eyes flashed like the steel he held in his hands as he ground the knife to an edge. When it was sharpened to his satisfaction he laid it upon the wooden frame which held the stone, took another from his pocket, and began working on it.

My hand was steady. The water fell as he wished it, drop by drop; the sound of its trickling and of the grinding mingled with the clashing of the bare boughs overhead.

Father had not answered my question, and speech was an effort that dull morning. I stood silent while the wheel whirled and creaked, and father ground and bent the blade, tried it, and made yet a finer edge. When it was done to his liking he straightened himself. "Put it in your pocket, somewhere about you; never be without it!" He handed me the gleaming steel across the blue-gray stone; and astounded, wide-eyed, gazing back at him, I read in his flashing eyes the fear I had not yesterday dreamed of, and by it measured the agony of his apprehension. The horror for a moment deadened me. I did not hear Emily's step nor know that she had come out of the house until I heard her say behind me, low and steady: "Give me the other."

"I will," father flashed.

Our backs were toward the lane, and so absorbed were we that we did not know that any one was near till a shrill "Mr. Yancey! Mr. Yancey!" startled us. "Here 's a note." A negro leaned from a foam-lathered horse. "I done come de very minute Mr. Rowan

heard de news. Dey done caught Marse Henry Latham, dat dey is; dey got him las' night."

Without a sound Emily sank down on the green grass at our feet.

XVI

BEFORE Emily opened her eyes father was hobbling away, his exclamations, "Goose — idiot — fool!" trailing after him. I thought them meant for Emily at first — father hated a scene — but that last word was for Henry and his foolhardiness, though I could have applied it myself to Emily and her nonsensical fainting-fit. I was wild with anxiety for the one in real danger; how had he been captured? what would it mean? Would he not be released as one of our county men had been? At the worst could they do more than hold him to be exchanged? Why was father so frightened?

As soon as I dared I left Mammy to care for Emily while I went in search of father. I found him in the dining-room, standing before the hearth, where the fire lighted for breakfast still smouldered. The big cat, who had lazily lingered by the warmth, rubbed

against his knee purring a hoarse note of satisfaction; but father noticed neither him nor me.

"How is Emily?" he asked without turning his head.

"There is nothing the matter with her to amount to much. I don't see why she should have been so foolish —" father shot me a keen glance — "nor you either," I added irritably. "You looked frightened to death."

Father shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"At the worst they can but hold Henry for exchange?"

"Pshaw!"

"Why not?" — sharply. "You think so yourself?"

"No, Henry has been a fool. He should have told you what he was about."

"He did. He said —"

"Oh, that was straight enough, but before — I have no patience with him."

"I don't know what you mean," I said faintly.

"No, and won't until I tell you right out. Henry was a government scout, that was

what he would call it. They might give it another name."

"What?" I gasped.

"Spy! Spy! You've got it now." Father's anxiety was the secret of his roughness. "Good God! don't you get to fainting too. The Lord deliver me from a lot of frightened women; if they don't faint they take to crying."

"I am not doing either," I asserted proudly.

"No?" with an anxious glance at the door.

I ran to it and shut it, I feared our whispers might penetrate through it and that other door to Emily's ear, and she had heard enough.

"Do they know?" I whispered.

"I think they do," — with intense irony.

"What will they do with him?" I breathed.

"Hang him, if they don't do him the courtesy to shoot him."

"No, no! They shall not!"

"Who will prevent them? You?"

"Yes, I." It was but bravado which prompted me.

Father leaned over on his crutch and peered into my face. "You have lost your senses," he said shortly.

"Perhaps I have."

I whirled from him, ran up to my room. In one flash, as if lightning had laid it bare, I saw a thing to be done for Henry's life, and I alone could do it. Had I the courage? Dare I try? Would there not be a thousand chances for failure against one slender possibility of success? I threw myself face downward on the bed, pressed the covers about my ears, held myself to that mental vision, and marked out the thing I could venture on, knowing that at the last I must trust to chance. Still, with that glimmer to lead me on, I dared not do nothing.

I heard Mammy when she went out to the kitchen, and followed her there. She had already placed her pots and kettles on the hearth. "Ise doin' de bes' I can," she grumbled as soon as she saw me. "Ise got dis dinnah to cook an' Ise gwine do it, but my haid is whirled clean erroun'. What wid yistiddy and de day befo', an' now dese

doin's, dis darky 's got a little mo' dan she can stan'. Let erlone Sam."

I stood still and listened, seeing that she veered to the very point I wished.

"My po' boy dyar widout one soul whar knows a thing erbout him, wid nobody to 'tend to him. What is gwine come o' him?"

"Why don't you go and see?" I asked gently.

Mammy whirled around, scattering the hot coals with her skirt.

"Look out!" I warned.

"Why don't I? name o' sense how is I gwine git dyar?"

"I told you I would take you."

"An' you 's doin' it, ain't you?"

"There has n't been time."

"One whole day an' a piece."

"I am going now."

"La, honey!" Her thick lips dropped apart.

"Get ready as soon as you can; but don't tell a soul what you are going to do, mind you! Tell Dick to put both horses to the

buggy and drive them to the gate. You watch the barn and start the minute you see him drive out."

"Glory be! Ise gwine git ready dis minute. Ise gwine fix him up some med'cine."

"What will you take him? What do you give him when he has one of these spells?"

"Fus' one thing an' den anuddah; ef boneset don't fotch him I tries peppah; but de bes' o' all is a good sweat in a feathah baid wid a brick at his haid an' one at his feet; it seems fairly to wuk de trouble out long wid de sweat.

"Ef I jes had a little laud'num," she bemoaned as she bustled heavily about; "when de pain is real downright sharp I gives him dat."

"There is a little in the house."

"Ef you 'll jes give me some."

I promised; already the plan worked well.

I hurried, but I was barely ready when the roll of wheels was heard. I had trusted to get away unseen until it was too late for interruption, but father was in the hall and through the open door I caught a glimpse

of Emily's white cheek where she lay asleep from the anodyne we had given her.

"What's that buggy for?" father demanded.

"For me to take Mammy to see Sam." Fast as my heart beat I spoke carelessly.

"To the fort?"

"That's where he is."

"You have lost your senses!" he railed, repeating the accusation he had before made.

"I shall need to find them," I answered airily.

"You-shall-not-go!" thumping his crutch upon the floor with each word for emphasis.

"I must," I pleaded, but he stood squarely in the door barring my exit, and he moved not one inch.

I looked at him for a breath's space, but saw that he was obdurate. "Let me pass?" I begged.

"You, a young woman!"

"Look at me." I turned slowly about. I was swathed in shawls and bonnet and veil. "I have a pass from the captain who was here yesterday permitting us to visit the

camp. While we are there something might happen. I might think of something, some chance. I must do it. You must let me."

"I shall not."

I gathered up my skirts, fled through the back door around the house, and out to the carriage before he had an idea of what I was doing; in a second more I was by Mammy's side, the reins in my hands, the buggy rocking from side to side as we sped down the lane.

I drove fast and furiously up hill and down, and at top speed along the level stretches. Mammy had not a word to say; she was torn between her anxiety for Sam and her fear for me.

My own heart sank lower and lower as we sped. Timid as I had always been, shy of disposition, and shielded by the surroundings of home, by father and husband, why had I ever dreamed so dare-devil a thing? What could I hope to do even were I once within the fort? What danger might there not be? My teeth chattered, I shook as with an ague when we turned down the

road toward the river and the fort. If Mammy had not been by my side, if Emily's face had not flashed before me, I should have turned the horses around, raced for home, hidden in the thick woods shadowing the road, — done anything but gone on.

I was so sick with fear that it was like nausea. My nervous fingers let the reins slip loose; the horses swerved to one side, jolted over a log, and shook Mammy half way off her seat.

"'Fo' Gawd," she groaned, "if you cyarnt drive no bettah 'n dat you 'll brek down befo' we gits dyar."

The prophecy sobered me. The raw salt air struck in our faces; we were nearly there. The sheltering woods were left behind, and before us stretched a sandy level which ran straight to the high bluffs by the river, where, huge and threatening to my frightened eyes, loomed the earthworks of the fort. A bastion before the ramparts guarded the entrance and upon its heights paced a sentinel who peered forward at us as we drove toward him out of the dusk.

"Halt!"

I pulled the horses back on their haunches.

His questions were so quick, so rapidly spoken, and I was so breathless from nervousness and fright that we could make no sense between us; but at the shouting a soldier came running out from the inner gate and I managed to tell him enough of my errand to send him hastening back into the fort with my precious slip of paper in his hands. As we waited, the wind cutting about us and the horses twisting restlessly beneath its keen lashings, I could hear nothing, no howling of the winds over the dreary levels, no sound of the tide on the shore, only my heart pounding until it seemed as if the sound of its throbbing must reach up to that figure which, straight and stern, was outlined against the faint light of the western sky, as he leaned upon his gun and looked down at us, a type of the inexorable, a symbol of that power against which I — *I* — was dreaming to pit my wits.

I felt weak and helpless enough to cry, to break into wild sobbing, when the soldier

returned; but his first words, grumpily and shortly spoken, sent the blood from its rushing to my head and brought back to me some semblance of common-sense.

"Captain Leighton is not here, but you will be admitted on his pass."

I clambered down at once; I was so uncertain in my movements, so stiff from the cold and my long drive, that with my swathings and in the dusk I seemed to perfection the old woman I had hoped to be thought, as we stumbled after our guide.

I feared when we had rounded the outer embankment and passed the sentinels at the inner gate that we would be taken to headquarters and examined there; I knew where the rude buildings stood at the head of the inclosure, looking down the rows of shanties built of logs and rough weather-boardings — Robert had too often described it all for me not to know — but our guide swerved to the left, and skirted the sides of the outermost cabins.

"He 's down here," he said shortly, as he pointed to a fire streaming up into the dark-

ness, beyond the buildings, yet within the ramparts and sheltered by them.

Mammy cast fearful glances about her, but I went looking straight ahead, holding fast to my courage with both hands. Still I saw, as if it were burnt on my brain, how ghostlike looked the rows of shanties, how weird were the rude interiors, when their rough tables and rusty stoves and bunks built against the walls showed through an open door; how listless were the soldiers, lounging there or in the open spaces. I saw a tall lank figure stoop over the fire we neared and turn the meat hanging from the forked saplings crossed above the flames; saw the light flash back from the cannon embedded in the earthworks near; and, with the keen perception of such moments, heard the sullen sound of the wind-lashed river, and the whirling of the spiteful gusts about the fort.

"There," cried the soldier, "there he is. You can see for yourself there is nothing the matter with him." He added some grumblings about "so much fuss about one nigger."

At the sound of voice and footsteps Sam wheeled nervously.

"Sam! Sam!" cried Mammy.

The boy gazed fearfully at us; he could not believe it possible that we were there.

"Sam!"

"Mammy!" he cried as he ran to her; she flung her arms about him, swaying him to and fro as she rocked.

"I heard you was sick," she moaned.

I walked past them to the other side of the fire and sat down on a log rolled close to the heat; sat down slowly, stiffly, as with difficulty. The wind beat flame and light from me and left me in shadow, but the glow fell bright on the grinning soldiers, on Mammy's ungainly figure, on Sam, thin, shaking, ashy of hue.

Mammy's loving eyes saw his weakness. "Is dis de way dey treats you?" she demanded indignantly. "Got you out hyar in dis col' win' at work? Marse Willum he'd had you in de cabin tucked up in baid wid de quilts piled up to yo' chin an' de fiah a-racin' up de chimney;

an' hyar — Come 'roun' to dis log an' sit down."

She led him, as if he needed help, near to where I sat. "Jes you set right down an' res'," with a defiant look out of her angry eyes at the soldier who stood where he had first taken up position on the other side of the camp fire.

"Old woman," he called, "we want that meat for supper, and we want it quick."

Mammy cast a shrewd glance at the venison. "'T is nigh done now."

"Then cut your talk short."

Mammy turned an indignant shoulder; she began fond interrogations concerning Sam's sickness, his pains, what remedies had been given him. I slid closer to him on the log.

"What dey give you to take?" she demanded.

Sam shook his head.

"What is you been doin'?"

Sam's sickly grin meant the best he could; but Mammy began moaning at sight of it.

"Stop your fuss," the soldier called out.

"Say what you got to say. You will have to be going directly."

And I had not had a single chance, not a word, no glimmer of a plan. Was this all? Should we start homeward along those black roads, the sullen night closing upon Henry's life? No, *no*, NO! I would wrench from the very darkness something, some hope. What was it Mammy was saying so foolishly at such a moment? — "Sam, what is dat you got a-bilin' in dat pot?"

"Coffee."

"Fer de lan's sake! I ain't had a drap o' coffee for nigh 'pon a year," she declared loudly.

"Get a cup and give her some," the soldier commanded with a laugh, — "the other old woman too."

Sam gaped. "Miss — Miss —" he stammered, but Mammy nudged him with her elbow.

"Hurry up," she said fretfully, as if she scarcely could wait. "Thank you, sah!" as Sam stumbled to his feet. "'T will suttenly tas'e good in de col'."

At the last word the soldier shivered. "The air from the river cuts like a knife," he grumbled as he bent to warm his hands over the coals.

"It do fer a fac'," Mammy agreed in a tone of warm sympathy, "an' down hyar de win' seems to come fairly azoonin'."

The soldier straightened from his crouching and began to walk up and down a few steps each way. Sam came back with two tin cups. He lifted the coffee-pot from the fire and filled them. I took the one he gave me and clasped my cold fingers about it for warmth. I had no intention of drinking it, but the hot steam of the coffee rose tantalizingly to my face; how good it smelled! I looked about us. No one was in that deserted corner but ourselves, the stars shone through the rifted clouds, and it was quite dark. I pulled my veil above my lips, took one slow sip; it was bitter, it was rank, but it seemed delicious. I sipped again and again. The soldier paced, more careless of his scrutiny.

"Sam," I whispered while my head was

bent over the cup, "look at Mammy as if you were talking to her. Where is Mr. Latham?"

The boy gave a quick start. The delight of seeing his mother had made him forget.

"Does you all know 'bout it?" he groaned.

"Answer my question," I whispered sternly. "Where is he?"

"In one o' de las' line o' houses."

The row of shanties was not far from us. "Which one?"

"Third one down."

"Sam, do you — do you know what they are going to do with him?"

The negro's teeth chattered. "Dey tells me dey gwine shoot him sho."

"When?"

"Ter-morrer."

For one instant I sat benumbed; my brain was barren, my heart a leaden lump. "Give me another cup?" I asked, striving to gain time. Sam filled it and Mammy's, and sat down again between us.

"Who takes him his supper?" I whispered.

"I dunno."

"Have you seen him?"

"I took his dinnah to him."

"It may be you; listen. Tell him —"

"I done brought you some med'cine," Mammy interrupted.

"Is there any guard over him?"

"A sojer at the do'."

"Some laud'num," Mammy went on, heedless of those whispers. "Ise gwine tell you how to take it."

I gasped. Here was a glimmer of an idea at last.

"Sam," I commanded tersely, "turn your face to Mammy. Take that soldier a cup of coffee, pour some laudanum in it, more than you have ever taken, but not too much, mind you; be careful."

"Ise gwine tell you how to take it," Mammy declared.

"Give me a pencil," I said quickly. "I'll write it. Here," as Sam felt in his pocket for the stub he usually carried, and I tore off the margin of the paper in which the bottle had been wrapped.

The soldier had paused by the fire. "Can you read?" he asked surprisedly of Sam.

"She taught me," crooking a thumb towards me and grinning sheepishly.

My hands trembled so that the words were scarcely legible. "Quick, there," the soldier commanded; "'t is time you were going." He turned away. I thrust the paper into Sam's hands.

"Give this to Mr. Latham. You hear?"

"'Fo' Gawd —"

"You are to do as I say. You have got to see him."

"An' hyar 's sumpin' else," began Mammy, fumbling in her pocket.

In a flash I remembered the knife I carried. I moved impatiently, whirling my skirts about Sam's knee, ran my hand into my pocket and, under the cover of my dress, thrust the knife into his hands. "And this also."

A bugle blast rang out. "Time 's up!" called our guard and guide.

I had not time for another word.

XVII

THE horses, restless from standing in the cold air, tugged at the reins. I pushed up my veil, set my feet against the dashboard, and leaned back with both hands holding the ribbons taut. We jolted over a rut and went pell-mell through a water-hole. The flying horses jerked the buggy out, but I heard the sharp snap of breaking leather. We were near a hill down which led two roads, and I pulled into the least used way, sprang out, and felt with nervous fingers for the broken harness. While I mended it with the hitching-strap we heard the approach of rapid hoof-beats, the measured tread of cavalry. It was the belated return of a foraging party. I stood at the horses' heads, stroked them and petted them, for fear that their whinnyings might betray our whereabouts. It seemed an hour before we heard the sharp commands of an

officer, bringing his men into order at the top of the hill, and the rapid riding whose sounds grew less.

"Dat 's de very man a-callin' out what was at our house day befo' yistidday," Mammy whispered when I was back by her side. "Ain't gwine fergit his voice in a hurry; no, sah."

I, too, had recognized the sharp, curt tones. "Thank the Lord he was away," I murmured devoutly. His manner was courteous, but too keen. The little I had been able to do might not have been accomplished had he been there.

Wildly anxious to meet no one, to be unseen, I urged the horses along the county road. At the forks two miles away I jumped out again and led them through the heavy underbrush, beneath the wide-set trees till we were so well hidden that no passer-by could see us.

Mammy had started to climb out when I did. "Sit still," I had commanded shortly.

"Chile, what is you gwine to do?" she asked as soon as I was back on my seat.

"Wait."

"What for?"

For what? Wait in wild, blind hope, for I had written on that yellow margin, "I will wait at the cross-roads till daybreak," and trusted Sam and the man who read it for the rest. How cold it was! how mournfully the wind whistled about us! The clouds fled with the night and the stars shone above us; through the screen of branches we could watch the white, deserted road, the four arms of it lying like a cross upon the breast of a country that was stricken with fear.

"Lan'," grumbled Mammy when an hour, two hours, passed, "what is you waitin' in dis col' place fer?"

It was best perhaps to let her know. "I am waiting to see if Henry —"

"Did you go dyar to git him loose?"

Did I? Oh, how little I had done! How blindly stupid I had been, how badly I had planned! Was there not something else I could have thought of? If it had only fallen to some one else to dare, some one more sen-

sible! And the hours, the last hours were slipping away. I groaned as deeply as Mammy had done.

"Gawd!" she cried, "why did n't you tell me?"

"Why?"

"Don't you know, ain't you got sense ernuff to know dat — My Gawd! ef he does, ef he does git erway, dey 'll shoot Sam!"

"No, no!" I cried, horror-stricken.

"Dey will, an' you knows it, an' you don't keer."

"Mammy!"

"My Gawd! my Gawd! an' you done took me dyar, an' I done holp kill him."

"For mercy's sake!" I pleaded.

"You ain't had no mercy on me."

"You knew all about Henry; you knew he was to be shot at noon. Did you want — "

"I ain't wantin' nuthin' 'bout nobody; I don't know nuthin' neidah. Let me git out o' dis."

"What are you going to do?" I cried, as I held on to her in desperation.

"Ise gwine back."

"What?"

"Ise gwine back. Ise gwine foot it ebery step. Ise gwine tell 'em Sam did n't know nuthin' 't all 'bout it."

"If you do that Sam will be shot sure."

"An' ef I don't — Miss Lucy," wringing her hands, "how could you do it? Sam 's been sickly all his life. He 's been in de house an' right erroun' you eber since you 's been bohn. 'T ain't lak he 'd been a fiel' niggah an' you skasely knowed him. Ain't you done learnt him to read? Did n't you begin wid yo' own book jes as soon as you knowed yo' letters yo'se'f?"

"Oh, Mammy, don't, don't! I did the best I could."

"You went to see Sam, sat dyar talkin' to him, an' dis night Marse Henry gits erway, an' Sam, he 's lef'!"

"Mammy!" I pleaded, "there is Henry's mother."

"An' dyar 's my chile Sam, lak hern."

"And Emily."

"What you know but Sam got a sweetheart, too?"

Somehow that broke the horror of it, brought my scattered senses together. I sat still thinking, thinking, while the horses tossed their heads restlessly; beyond the sounds of their impatience, of swaying branches and creaking harness, there were no others.

Think as I might I saw but one thing now — to wait, to keep my tryst till daylight paled the sky. I lifted my heart in an agony of prayer to God, — a prayer which had but one refrain, "We are Thy children, O God! Remember us!"

And as I waited, hands clenched on the reins, teeth set, the blood running slower and colder in my veins, all my body was an ache of cold and discomfort. The stars, which were low in the east when we began our watch, climbed higher overhead; the winds died to the hush of midnight, still there was no sound along the empty road.

Mammy's low moans and her broken snatches of prayer never ceased; she sat rocking herself back and forth in the buggy.

The horses twisted about, but, after much coaxing, settled down to their enforced waiting, with bent heads and drooping tails. As the long hours wore on one of them suddenly lifted his head, then the other; with heads turned and ears pricked back they stood motionless, listening. I nudged Mammy into silence, and held my breath as I watched. There was the beat of a footstep; I lost it, heard it again; and then out into the road stepped a tall, straight figure. "Oh, God!" I breathed in an ecstasy of hope; "have mercy upon us," I cried, for some one followed. It could not be Henry.

"De lan'! de lan's sake!" Mammy's strident cry rang out on the stillness of the night. A low laugh from the road sent the blood to my heart.

"Lucy, where are you?"

"Here, here!" I sprang down, ran to him, caught his hands and clung to them, laughing hysterically. Mammy was crying softly over Sam.

We waited but a second while he told of sleeping sentinels, scaled embankments, and

flight. "Get the horses back in the road. Where are they?" Henry ran to their heads, backed them out of their hiding-place, and we looked at each other for half a breath's space in dismay. What should we do, the four of us?

"Mammy, get in," I commanded. "Sam, ride one of the horses; Molly is the strongest, the one nearest you." I jumped in, sat down in Mammy's lap, picked up the reins and handed them to Henry.

Midnight was two hours past. We must be home before the first streak of dawn. No one, not even our nearest neighbor, must know of that mad flight. On the horses raced, Henry urging them. We drew rein to listen once or twice, but no sound of pursuit came on the cold air; down the long road, firm as clay is before the frost works it into roughness; up hill and down; through sandy bottoms, splashing over streams; whirling sharply around the empty storehouse at The Ordinary; and at last, the sound of our own gate clanging behind us, with whirling wheels and rapid hoof-beats, with the cape

of Sam's old army coat blown straight behind him, we neared the house. Lights streamed from the windows, the door was flung wide to the bitter night. My shout rang and echoed through the stillness of the dawn. "Safe!" I cried. "They are safe!"

XVIII

THEY were safe only so far, but in the very madness of delight they seemed to have lost their senses; and a hubbub of cries, exclamations, and thanksgivings drowned every word of warning I tried to speak. Already the sunrise flushed the sky. We knew that as soon as their horses could bring the soldiers that day to our gate they would be there, that our house would be searched — cranny and crevice, barn and corn-house, and every possible hiding-place. Nothing would belate them but the hour of their discovery, and that must have already come.

"You must hide," I begged; "you must not delay a moment longer. Run!" for the way they must take to the woods lay straight across the open fields, and any pursuer down the lane could spy them. "Sam knows the way to the old cabin in the

pines; you must stay there till night; we will send you something to eat — if we can. At night you must be off. Let him go, Emily! Father, make her."

Mammy dragged Sam up from before the fire, where he knelt warming his long, thin fingers.

"Go 'long! Don't you heah? Ain't you got no sense?"

"Come, Henry, come!" I heard father's voice as he called warning and heeding after them, but before they were out of sight I sank down in my chair. From door and window the household watched, watched the lane and them; but my part was done. I leaned so close to the heat that my cheek was fairly blistered, but the very marrow of my bones seemed turned to ice. The voices in the hall seemed to come from long distances. The rest I scarcely remember, — the ague which shook me, the fever which ran high after it. They got me to bed in the chamber, and there I lay when some few hours later the clatter in the lane told that pursuit was near. I heard the uproar, and

father's voice in sharper and sharper remonstrances; but in spite of all he could say, the chamber door was pushed open, a strong, impatient footstep rang on the bare floor.

I opened my eyes. There stood the captain, embarrassed, angry, yet persistent. "You will pardon me — I did not know — " he stammered.

"I told you my daughter was here, ill!" father blazed.

"But — " He hesitated. It was easy to understand. The captain had not believed the tale of my being abed, and had pushed his way in. Emily leaned against the bed looking like a ruffled and frightened bird; Mammy stood in the door, her arms akimbo, her eyes flashing; father, near me, watched with scorn and hatred and impotent rage showing in every line of his face, every flash of his eyes.

The captain wrathfully eyed my red face. "You visited the camp yesterday," he stated authoritatively.

I made a gesture of assent.

"And you assisted the spy we had cap-

tured to escape," he accused as sternly as he had at first spoken.

I only looked at him with wide-open eyes and prayed that Emily would not speak.

"And the negro boy?"

"Was he a pris'nah too?" It was Mammy's voice.

"We must search your house."

"Do so," said father, haughtily.

The captain turned, and went out; we heard the search from room to room. The officer came again into the chamber. "You have them in hiding somewhere near," he accused. "The spy —"

Emily made a step nearer him. "He was no spy; you know it," she vowed hotly.

"He was. And he was here a night and day before we captured him."

"To see me."

The captain gave her a searching look. "We caught him —"

"As he went to see his mother. I have heard how you took him. A brave thing to do! six against one, hiding all of you on the hillside till he was well between you!"

Emily stood as straight as the captain held himself, and gave him angry glance for angry glance.

"His mother has the misfortune of living near to your encampment," added father, ironically.

"But for your daughter's interference he would have been shot this morning," blurted the captain, stung into brutality.

Emily reeled back against the bed. She had never heard of Henry's extremity of danger.

"Are you not glad that it has not been done, that he is alive, well?" I cried as I looked directly into the officer's eyes; and in that curious way in which I understood him, through and through, though he represented to me a force I hated, and I to him a duty he did not desire, I read his thought.

"I am accountable," he said shortly.

"For doing your duty; you have done it."

He looked at me, a sudden flame of anger in his eyes. "Your visit to camp has not been beneficial; it might not be safe to repeat it," he added significantly.

"I pray never to have need to, never to see it again!" I cried vehemently as he strode out of the room.

In the hall he came face to face with Mammy. "If that boy of yours is ever caught, he will be shot at sight."

Mammy was insolent in her joy. "Yes, sah," she said with treacherous courtesy. "Yes, sah; but you 's got to cotch him fus'."

That night a little cavalcade took its way from our house. There was Henry, there was Sam; it was not safe for the boy to stay in the county, and he was wild to follow Henry to the war, so we let him go. And there was father! In the few words he always used when his feeling was intense he announced just before nightfall that he was going. He was impelled, he said; every drop of blood within him was stirred. To remain inactive was impossible. He could ride as straight and as long, sit as true and aim as well as any man, and every man was needed. He went.

XIX

EMILY was to stay with me, but in a few days a carriage came for her from Middlesex; her mother was ill, and her aunt had sent for her. We were left alone. Worst of all, that visit to the fort had made us a marked people; and the well-stocked farm offered excellent foraging ground. Scantiness of food we had never imagined, but with a smokehouse from whose rafters hung no meat, with an empty corn-crib, with no cabbages piled and covered in the garden, with no potatoes in the small cellar under the kitchen floor, we were face to face with want before we divined its meaning.

With the lack of food came also that of clothing. I owned a plaid silk, a flowered dimity, — the dresses Mammy had saved, — and the mousseline I wore that day. Nor would the wrist-big rolls of Confederate bills

in father's drawer buy one yard of calico, — for the shelves of the country stores were empty. For those few things which could be bought, it took ever more and more of those bills, with higher and higher numbers, until even the soldiers who rifled us laughed when they wrenched open the drawer and saw them, and they left them undisturbed. They well knew that the money which was of value was in their pockets, not in ours.

But there is no excuse for hugging one's misery forever to heart. I did not cherish mine. Besides, I think that with every heavy fall of fate my courage mounted higher. I lived alone where I had thought it impossible — or would have thought it so, had such a wild idea once crossed my brain — to stay one night unguarded. I faced danger daily, lived in an expectancy of it, and was so imbued with constant fear that, come what might, I felt no sudden shock.

The want of clothes, however, was pressing. Winter was at hand and the days were already bitter. My mousseline, spite of its patches, went to rags upon my back. I

could not go clad in thin dimity or in silk, and even had I donned them, their service would have been short-lived.

"Miss Nancy," I complained, on one of my few visits to the small house on the Dragon, "I am literally going to rags." I pointed to my elbows. "What shall I do?"

I had made myself quite comfortable before her hearth. The clear and cold winter's day and the long walk had set my blood a-dancing. It was more in merriment than dismay that I asked, for with Miss Nancy, somehow, people were apt to tell just what they felt and thought, to speak truth instead of idle pleasantries. Her remoteness set her apart from the current of affairs, but left her free to fathom its depths.

She sat now across from me, her hands folded in her lap, her thin, bare arms showing through the folds of the shawl, the keen, dark eyes in her wrinkled face gleaming with kind anxiety. The gay stripes of her home-woven carpet showed warm on the floor, the sunken and uneven hearth was freshly reddened, the red and yellow flames raced up

the rough, black chimney; the cup and saucer I had given her, an old clock, and a brass candlestick gleamed on the mantel-shelf. Small as was the room crowded with the loom, simple as were its furnishings, I felt always when there like cuddling down in peace, abiding in comfort, coming to a breathing-place — oh! I cannot express it, but the place — all of it — breathed of unbroken calm; one warmed one's self in it as if it were sunshine.

Miss Nancy leaned toward me and spoke hesitantly: "Have you any thread?"

"Cotton is the only thing we have left," I answered, laughing at the admission.

"If you could dye it — but it would ruin your hands," — in delicate deprecation.

"What does that matter?" I asked scornfully.

"Make Maria do it; she knows how, I expect." Miss Nancy was all energy now. "If she would, I could weave it and — oh, dear me! that would never do. Cotton homespun! You could never wear it."

"Try me. I should be prouder of it than

of anything I ever had. What must I do? Tell me."

"Oh, dear me!" Miss Nancy repeated in a quiver of excitement. "Why didn't we think of it before? and you — poor child, that dress is falling off your back. I can weave 'em downright pretty, too. Brown, now, that would be so becoming to you; and you could get the coloring for that so easy."

"Yes," in answer to my demand as to how it should be done, "easy enough. Get an old iron pot," she put the skinny forefinger of one hand into the palm of the other, beating it impressively as she talked, "one you don't want to use again, — the dye ruins it, you know, — and get all the little pieces, the scraps of old iron you can find — "

"How much?" I interrupted.

"Oh, Maria will know. I 'll be bound she does. If she does n't I 'll come and show you myself. Put the iron scraps in the pot and some apple-bark — oh! a double handful — and fill it with water, and start a low fire under it. Just keep it slow and sure, boiling right along three or four hours, and then

there 's your dye. A pretty brown it makes too, it will just match your hair; and I 'll weave a stripe, just a thread of white through it. La, child, you 'll look as sweet as a peach in it."

I went home with Miss Nancy's directions ringing in my ears, and I was almost as enthusiastic as she had been; I stopped at the kitchen door to tell Mammy of them. There she sat in a low chair drawn close before the hearth, bending over a skillet whose contents were crackling from the heat of the red-hot embers piled under it. She stirred the browning stuff anxiously, and the savory smell of it filled the air.

"What is it?" I asked, coming close and sniffing delightedly.

"'T was wheat; de Lawd only knows what it 's gwine tuhn out to be. Ise tryin' to make sumpin' I heard of de uddah day," she explained, as I put my hand on her shoulder and leaned over to watch. "Honey, it seems to me if I jes had one cup o' coffee I 'd be ready fer Kingdom-come. It seems to me I 'd be willin' to go clean to de camp to git it."

"Well, I would n't, then," I said tersely. "Besides — "

"Dyar ain't no besides, an' I knows it, but Ise jes honin' fer it; you 'member how it smelled dat day?"

"This smells pretty good," I declared valiantly.

"Smells! dat ain't de thing, but how is it gwine tas'e? De Lawd, dey say He know eberything an' how to do eberything, an' dat 's true, it 's bleeged to be true. But how come He lef' anything you cyarnt do widout lak coffee jes to grow in one little spot an' you have to sen' an' sen' to git it, it beats me. Miss Lucy, you look hyar! Ef dem sojers would leab us erlone, dyar ain't nuthin' we 'd be in need of. Dyar 's de corn will grow right hyar to mek all de meal you want, and de wheat to mek all de flour. Dyar 's de gyarden; dyar 's chickens an' tukkys an' ducks an' sheep an' cows — leastways dey was — Ise talkin' 'bout what we 're been used to, not dese Gawd-forsaken days; an' you can raise de cane to mek de sorghum ef you cyarnt get de sugar. Dyar 's ebery-

thing in Gawd's worl' you want 'ceppin' 't is dat little brown berry what look so wuthless in yo' han' an' tas'e so good in yo' mouf. De Lawd He knows bes', I 'spose, but aftah He gin us all dat why He did n't put de coffee bush in de fence cornder, same lak chincapins, beats me. S'pose He thought 't would 'a' been too much lak Paradise here below an' we nebbah would be willin' to leab it — um — hum!" Mammy's plaint grew into a rhapsody. She rocked herself gently, then leaned forward to give the crackling wheat a fresh stir.

"Dis thing," she said contemptuously as a hot grain flew up with the force of its bursting and hit her hand, "dis thing is what dat Oakleigh niggah tole me de uddah day at De O'n'ry dat dey is usin'. I 'll try it dis once. It might look sort o' lak de real stuff an' 'mind you of it anyhow. Ise gwine see ef you can stummick it fer suppah."

"What are you going to have for supper anyhow?" I asked childishly. The frosty air had made me hungry enough to eat anything.

Mammy's face cleared to a look of intense

satisfaction. "Batter-braid! Dick done foun' a nes' in de foddah stack wid two aigs in it. He lef' one to 'courage de hen what 's layin' dyar, an' he brung me one. An', Miss Lucy," as if it were a secret too good to keep, "Ise done churned while you was down to Miss Nancy's, an' dyar 's buttah — yas 'm, fresh buttah."

"Is the bread nearly done?"

"La! jes lissen." Mammy was delighted, and for the time being the questions I had stopped to ask were forgotten; but they were remembered in due time.

A useless old kettle, whose days for sorghum boiling were ended, was found and carried out behind the woodpile, where chips were plentiful. Dick and I hunted high and low for iron scraps.

"Lan's sakes!" Mammy cried when she saw me one morning poking about behind the kitchen. "Go 'long, Miss Lucy, you 'll rake dis place lak a harrow does de gyarden. You 's got ernuff iron for two bilin's already. Tell Dick to fotch me some watah from de spring, Ise got de apple-bark all ready."

We started the slow fire under the kettle, proportioned bark and iron duly, filled the pot to the rim, and then Mammy began to look anxious. "Ise got some wuk to do, an' Dick he ought to go 'long to de fiel' to help 'Zekiel."

"All right! Go along both of you. I will stay here and attend to the fire."

"You 're sho you won't mind, honey? Ain't you got sumpin' else you wants to do?"

"Not a thing."

"Well, jes keep it a-bilin', none too fas' an' none too slow, jes steady lak, an' stir it wid a stick ebery now an' den."

I sat down on an old scarred chopping-log, gathered the big chips and the little chips from far and near, and fed the clear, steady fire. The pungent smell of it rose into the still morning air. The sun, climbing higher, streamed down on me where I sat lazily and contentedly, on the fields behind the house, the woodpile, the kitchen, Mammy's cabin, and the house; I pushed back my bonnet to look toward it. The doors of the hall, back and front, were wide-

open, and the ribbon of the lane lay white between the brown corn-furrows. Crows were calling overhead, and some of the few fowls we had left to us came clucking with nervous, sidelong glances to my feet.

I clasped my hands around my knees and leaned back, watching the thin curl of smoke above the chimney top. As I sat there, idly, I heard the baying of hounds, faint at first, but gradually louder, and many voices. The sounds came from the thick woods beyond us. I sprang to my feet as a reddish streak flashed across the fields; the hounds behind raced in full cry, and close at their heels pounded a squad of our men, gray-clad, men from a regiment then recruiting across the Dragon. The flight of the fox, the baying dogs, running with stretched out bodies and noses close to the ground, were as exhilarating as the frosty morning. I turned to watch the course the fox took; for an instant my glance fell through the hall on the lane beyond, — straight out from the pines rode a squad of blue!

I wrenched my sun-bonnet from my head,

waved it at the hunters; they thought it a cheer, and waved their hats. I raced to the house, shrieking for Mammy to follow as I fled.

"Bar the door!" We slammed it shut and slipped the bar into its hasps.

We ran to the other, and as we flung it to we heard a whirlwind of hoof-beats in the back yard, a yell splitting the air like thunder, and the "rip, rip" of bullets pattering against the house. In the hall we pressed ourselves close against the partition walls. A shower of glass rattled from the chamber window to the floor; groans and yells entangled; and then, as suddenly as a sharp storm of summer rolls away, — hoof-beats, silence.

The deadly quiet was unbearable. I must see outside. Huddling together we crept into the chamber. Through the shattered panes the daylight streamed, and down the lane fled the blue, the gray in pursuit.

"Hurrah!" I cried insanely, "hurrah!"

"Hush, hush! dyar mought be somebody out dyar."

I had not even thought of it.

We ran out, Mammy first. "Gawd-a-mighty!" she cried, as she shrank back against the door.

"What is it?" I peered fearfully over her shoulder. There, under the chamber window, with face buried in the long violet leaves, lay a figure crumpled as he had fallen. Trembling, we crept toward him. I leaned over, put my hand on his head, too dazed for consciousness. I turned the face upward, and gave one wild shriek: "Robert!"

XX

WHEN I opened my eyes I lay for an instant looking up into the blue. The violet leaves rubbed my cheek. I turned my head feebly and a purple bud peered into my eyes. "The violets are about to bloom," I opened my lips to say, when a spatter of blood on the green leaves caught my glance. I remembered. "Is he dead?" I gasped.

"He ain't no nigher daid dan you has been," snapped Mammy, though the tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"Where is he?" I asked as I stumbled to my feet.

"In de chambah."

I never asked who carried him there. 'Zekiel and Dick had been hiding in the barn and ran up to the house as we came out; they had lifted Robert into the room and left Mammy with me. She threw her

arms around me as I tottered, swept me from my feet as if I had been a child, and carried me straight into the room.

"Dyar, you can see fer yo'se'f;" she declared as she tumbled me down on the wide tester bed.

Robert lay on the other side, his eyes were open, conscious. "Lucy!" he said faintly, his hand groping along the counterpane for mine.

"Run fer Miss Nancy," Mammy whispered to Dick. "Run as if de Ole Scratch was behin' you an' you was plumb distracted yo'se'f. Ain't a soul hyar what knows what to do. Lemme see, Marse Robert, don't you want me to tek yo' coat off, to do sumpin', to try an' fin' whar you is huht? You might be a-bleedin' to death right now."

Every spark of fear I had, fled from me; I rolled over and was on my feet before the words left her mouth. "We must get his coat off!" I cried, but my hands trembled too much for service. It was Maria and 'Zekiel who stripped Robert to his shirt. I clenched the bedpost as I saw the great

blood-stain there on the left side, but it was high up, close to the shoulder, thank God! and there was no fresh flowing widening the sinister stain, only that one ominous place which we dared not touch for fear the tearing of the linen from the wound might start the flow afresh. We waited, the minutes dragging like hours, for Miss Nancy's help. How deftly she gave it when at last she had come! How firm and skilful were her small, wrinkled hands! She looked at me when she had nearly finished and sent me from the room.

"It's all right, all right, nothing to hurt him seriously," she whispered as she pushed me gently outside the door. "Sit down on the step a minute — no, the back door. I will be there directly. Maria will help me."

I obeyed. The sun had climbed but two hours higher since I watched it idly from the woodpile, and stood now at his zenith. The warm and tender sunshine of a mild winter's day brooded over fields and yard and house; above the chimneys floated thin curls of smoke — the banners of peace; I leaned my

head against the door-frame as house and yard whirled before my vision.

"Lucy!" — I had not heard Miss Nancy's light step — "come here!" She nodded to the bed where Robert lay peacefully asleep. "He 's all right," she repeated; "bad place in his shoulder, but it is only a flesh wound; it will heal all right; a little time and care, that 's all. Child, do you know what saved his life? that button on his coat, that one little button." I felt her clutch on my shoulder and saw her eyes dilate. "A bullet struck there and the blow over his heart made him unconscious; then there 's the other wound, you know."

"He will live!" I breathed ecstatically.

"There is no reason on earth why he should n't, but —" Miss Nancy was standing near the middle of the room, the wind blew through the shattered panes, the broken glass littered the floor, the fire was dead on the hearth. "Come out into the hall," she whispered.

We stepped out into the blaze of the noon sunshine along the white-pine floor. The

gate was flung wide open, the grass torn and trampled; the fields shimmered in the warmth, and beyond stood the solemn guard of the pines. There she told me what must be done. Robert must be removed to her house. To allow him to remain here would be to risk captivity, and that in his condition might mean the worst; for some time to come he would need the most careful attention, and Miss Nancy could give it. I was convinced, and under her brisk directions we got him somehow — I cannot tell it clearly, it runs together with a blur of horror in my mind — that very day, down to the security of that refuge. Nor can I well recall the first few days that followed, but there came one when Miss Nancy brusquely set before me another duty: Robert was safe on the road to recovery; I must go home and leave her to tend him.

It was absurd, and I told her so in no stinted terms, but she stood firm.

" There is nothing done in this world but everybody knows it; seems so anyhow. If you stay here much longer, people will hear

you are not at home, and then they will want to know why — and they will find out. Next thing it will be known at the fort. Think they could n't find their way down here? Lord! they could if they were set on it; don't you fool yourself. There 's just one thing to do — to keep them from wanting to. You 've got to go back home and live right along as if nothing at all had happened; if you have n't got the courage for that — "

I flared out at that. Would they never be done with their cant of it? was I to hear it on every side? Had I not shown some strength?

" Never mind, never mind," Miss Nancy soothed. " But we must take care of Robert now. He is getting along all right; no fever, not a bit of it. I can attend to his wounds as well as any doctor could. It 's a good thing people do know a little about nursing, when the only doctor left in the county is old Dr. Carnes, and he 's staying home just because he is too old to go; he 's almost too feeble to get around anyway.

Lord only knows what would happen if somebody were to be taken really ill and beyond our little remedies.

"Feels nice to be out in the fresh air, does n't it?"

We had come out to the door and stood looking at the small yard, the box-hedges, the leafless shrubs. In the room we had left, Robert lay asleep on a bed which had been put up where the loom used to stand; the sunshine fell in a beam of warmth across his feet, and the look of his face even in his sleep was absurdly happy.

Miss Nancy stood for a second holding her shawl about her shoulders, her head lifted, an intent but far-away look in her eyes.

"I will get Molly to look after him," she declared presently; "I am going to see if there are any fresh eggs. Maybe Robert could eat one. How does he like them cooked?"

"I don't know."

"What! And married two years and a half!"

"I have been married seven months," I asserted.

"Now did you ever!" Miss Nancy laughed, as she led the way down the path to the low, sod-covered hen-house. "Wait!" She lifted her skirt daintily, and stepped across the log below the doorway. "Six!" triumphantly. "The hens must know I have company. I will carry these to the house and come back."

I waited leaning against the sod, where the grass showed a spear of green here and there, and in the intense silence I could hear the rush of the Dragon at the foot of the hill, and the monotone of the wind in the great forest.

Miss Nancy came back slowly as if in deep thought. Her thin wrinkled hands were clasped across the shawl folded on her breast, her straggling gray hair blew gently about her forehead.

"Let's go this way." She put one small hand on my arm and turned me toward a path leading down the hillside; we went silently till our feet were stayed by the

stream. There it ran, its depths dark and brown from the many cypress knees bending above it or growing in the swirl of its waters. The cypresses were bare now of their lance-like leaves; their twisted bodies were like brown, rough giants asleep. One huge tree at our feet, with its roots deep in the hillside, thrust its trunk straight out over the water, and then shot at right angles upwards. I walked out on it and sat down. I could have dangled my feet over the rushing water and at any other time I would have done so; but now I leaned against the trunk, slipped my bonnet from my head, and felt the cool touch of the wind, and listened to the rush of the water. Looking down at Miss Nancy near me, I saw the strained, determined look of her face. She lifted her bent head, her eyes met mine.

"Yes," she said dreamily, as if she spoke the conclusion of her thought, "I will take care of Robert; I shall be happy to do it."

"Happy!" I repeated in sudden anger.

"Happy to be of use to him," she corrected with dignity, "not happy because he is ill.

But as he lies there — " she brushed her hand across her forehead. " He is a handsome man," she added irrelevantly.

I smiled. Robert was not always so considered.

" In spite of his red head? " I asked whimsically.

" His hair! It is beautiful."

So I had thought many a time as I had run my fingers through its heavy waves.

" It is just the color of his father's," she added dreamily.

" Did you know his father? "

" I? Yes."

" Tell me of him? " I asked eagerly.

" I think I will," she answered composedly. But there was some little pause of painful thought before Miss Nancy began.

" Robert often talks of him? " she asked softly.

" No," I declared curtly.

" Why — he — "

" You have heard of him; every one has."

" I know — I know — But his son! "

" He treated his wife shamefully."

Miss Nancy clenched her hands.

"He spent every cent of her money, and his too, and left Robert — "

"Don't say it! But he loved him."

"Who?"

"Robert's father loved his own son."

"I doubt it. It did n't look much like it."

"But in his home life?"

"I have heard nothing to his credit."

"Robert loved him!" the little woman insisted incredulously.

I smiled scornfully. "I suppose he did."

"Suppose, suppose! Why should n't he? If ever a man was worthy of being loved, it was Henry Aylett."

"He did n't show it."

"He was; and it was their fault if he was not."

"Whose?" coldly.

"His mother's, his father's, his sister's, — all of them; if they are dead and gone, I say it, know it. It was their fault."

"How do you know so much about him?" I asked awkwardly.

"I? I have been thinking I would tell you. I must tell you, — with Robert's face there on the pillow so like his. Has no one, none of the older people ever told you of me?"

I shook my head.

"It is a wonder! They talked of me — or of Henry — enough once. But it has been long ago, — so long ago that it is time it was forgotten. I am glad they are not still babbling about it," fiercely.

I was too astounded at this outburst to say a word, and Miss Nancy's thoughts went back a long way. When she began again it was at a far-off point. "You have seen where they lived, — Robert's people?"

"Robert took me there one day."

"You remember where the gate opens on the road, there was a little house right across from it? The building is gone, but you can see where it stood."

"Yes."

"That was where we lived. We were close enough, 'at their gates,' but we were 'poor white trash,' and taught to keep our

place. His mother would come across the road once a year, come quite grandly and sit by our hearth, her supercilious glance searching every corner of the room. We were not forgotten — oh, no! nor neglected. At hog-killing time a negro was sent to bring us sausage, spare-ribs, or something; in summer a piece of the fresh-killed lamb was left at our door; we were duly remembered at Christmas. They were too grand not to be kind.

"But Henry used to steal off from the house to the negro cabins, and with the boys to the woods. There was where I saw him. I lived in them myself, like the deer or the rabbit or any wild, shy thing. I knew where flowed the clearest stream to wander by, and would sing, drowning its voice. I knew where the waters could be dammed and spread into lakes for floating crafts of bark and leaf; where the minnows darted, or the wild grape looped a swing; where the chestnut unfolded a betraying leaf in May-time; where the pine needles were dry, shielded from all weathers, and circled by

twisting roots into kitchen and hall and chamber for fairy housekeeping. We saved all the bits of broken china or glass for its furnishing."

Miss Nancy leaned forward looking down into the dark water. Did she see it mirrored there, — the deep wood, the great tree, the fairy palace at its foot, and that childish two for king and queen?

"When we grew bigger — well, no one knew at the big house of the hours he spent playing about our yard, of the many times he sat by our fire, and ate of our food till he had no appetite for the dinners of his own home. They never paid any attention to me anyway, never seemed to know that I existed. So it was until — well, I never knew when he was grown up, or when I was, or when we began to be more than playfellows. We never were!

"But one day I had been up the road to pick blackberries. The sun was as bright, and the day — no one was ever happier than I was then, no one! When my basket was nearly full I heard a horse come trotting

along the road. I hid. I never liked people, many of them. I never liked to be seen, to meet anybody. I never went to church. I would not be scorned, pointed out as I was —on account of —of my birth. So I hid. When I saw it was Henry I ran laughing out into the road.

"He jumped from his horse, threw the bridle over his arm, and together we walked down the path by the road. We had eyes and ears for nothing but ourselves, I suppose. The family carriage drove right up behind us. The sandy road had deadened the sounds anyhow. I will not tell you what happened. There sat his mother, and she carried Henry off with her, the negro who had been sitting up behind the carriage to open the gates riding his horse. That night our house was burned down over our heads. God forgive me if the thought I have always had about its burning is false. Early in the morning, as if at the very first news of it, Henry's mother came over— grand and stiff and kind.

"I went one way as she came the other.

I heard nothing of what she said, but when I came back from the woods, mother was packing her few things in an ox-cart, and she was eager and excited. They were coming home that day, here. This little place belonged to Henry's mother and she had given it to mine. There was nothing for me to do but to come with her.

"I never saw Henry again. I thought — I looked — but his mother knew how to manage him, I suppose. In six months' time he married the woman his mother had picked out for him years before. It was all right. I had never thought of his marrying me, or anybody; but I was not surprised. How could he help it? how could he help it?"

I felt hot anger and resentment, but pity too. "And you?" I asked softly.

She started as if from long reverie. "It took me a long time to see it all; it was not till I knew he was married. Then I vowed I would never stay at home. I went to Richmond to make a living. I knew nothing, nothing. Wild as I had always been, I

was handy. I knew how to spin, to weave, to raise chickens, to work in the garden. Who wanted that done? I tried to take care of little children, to teach them. I had picked up some little learning myself; but it would n't do. I tried sewing. Between them I got along somehow. Then mother sent for me. Sister Molly was married and gone away, father was dead, mother was bedridden. There was nothing to do but to come. Here I heard that Henry had gone off North with his wife.

"I thought I could not stand it at first, living here, but she lay there so long, and I stayed so long waiting on her, that when she died I felt as if I had become a part of the place. I had set out the flowers, planted the box, put out the fruit trees, worked the garden. It seemed the only life I had known, in this world anyhow.

"And, child, when Robert came back, when I knew who had bought the farm, when he came down here one day — Leave him here and you go 'long home. It will be found out if you don't, and nothing could

save him. Leave him here! it will be something for me to be thankful for in all these years. Poor Henry! poor Henry! it was wrong, all wrong!"

Wrong? Yes! But the wrong began further back than that. It began with the ancestry which made Miss Nancy good to look upon and high of spirit. Miss Nancy was born before her mother's marriage, and the man at whose wedding feast she sat, a wide-eyed child, when her mother was married, was not the man whom she should have named "father."

XXI

THE days went by to seven; it was Christmas eve. It was good to know that Robert was safe, to remember his nurse's delighted care of him, to recall the flush on her wrinkled cheek, to think that he himself had walked that day to the cabin door and stood there watching when I left — else the bareness and dreariness would have been unendurable.

Mammy went about her kitchen with pursed-up lips and with groanings and lamentations over her empty skillets and kettles. "Whar is de ham dat ought to be a-bilin' hyar, an' de tukky dat ought to be a-roastin' till de smell o' it done gone clear to de house?"

"For mercy's sake, hush," I cried petulantly, "you make me hungry."

"An' narry a cake in de house. My mouf 's been waterin' all day jes a-thinkin' o'

all dem things dat did n't use to be any mo' den de watah in de spring."

I sighed in sympathy. The thought was tantalizing to my keen appetite, but as I stood on the rough hearth and looked down on its vacancy, I said softly, "There is something else to think of: Robert is here."

"When he done come?"

"Now, Mammy, you know that is not what I mean," impatiently; "you know he could n't be here, at this house."

"Hm!" while I stood watching the gaping, sooty chimney's mouth, the broken andirons, the plenteous fire — of that, at least, there was enough.

"Dat 's a fac', dat 's a fac'!" after a silence, while Mammy stood on the other side of the hearth as thoughtful as I. "But I tell you, Miss Lucy," with an impatient toss of her head and a shake of her fat shoulders, "when you sets down to de table ter-morrer an' says 'Fer what we are 'bout to receive, Lawd make us thankful,' dyar won't be much dyar to make a fuss ober."

Mammy bustled about, more from a sense

of irritation than because there was anything to do, but I stood still thinking. I was tired and worn. I had put into the energy needed for that last week all that I had, and there was no reserve strength left to buoy me up at a moment when no call was being made upon my faculties. I was exhausted. I thought of the season, of that day in other years. No holiday will ever be to humankind so much as Christmas. It is not only the significance of that divine birth of which it stands the constant reminder, it is that, through the memory of the divine love which gave so much, our hearts go out to all our brotherhood, making life deep and intense. The days stand out like sentinels, and we unconsciously mark them as such, even in our most careless years. I recalled the first Christmas in this backwoods home, our gay feasting, father's share in it, — there had been no news of him since Robert came, — Robert's delight — and Robert himself must go back in a week to his regiment.

Our household would be once more Mammy, 'Zekiel, Dick, and I. If it had

not been for that comfort, which in answer to my need and seeking I had begun to feel as an atmosphere about me, I could not have faced the thought of it; as it was, I drew a long breath standing there on the old, worn hearth, peering into the flames and watching the ruddy coals as if, as of old, they held some hint of the future.

Mammy heard me and turned. "Chile," she cried anxiously, "you 'll scorch yo' skirt standin' dyar so close to de fiah. 'Clare ef 't ain't hot now!" she ran her hands down the front breadth; "an' dat 's the onlies' one you got. Miss Nancy 's thinkin' o' sumpin' else now 'sides weavin'. You bettah go 'long in de house an' res' yo'se'f."

I had stopped in the kitchen on my way across the yard as I came home from Miss Nancy's; the glowing hearth, Mammy's comfortable self, her warm-hearted love were always a loadstone. My feet seldom carried me along the path straight past it; it was a half-way house for every errand.

"Go 'long in de house an' res' yo'se'f," she repeated. "You looks clean tuckered out."

I went slowly. I was tired out with my loneliness. The early dusk darkened the land, but through the window-panes, which were not patched with paper or sealed with board, the firelight shone out on the yard. I went into the empty chamber and took from the closet the shirts I had made for Robert and had saved through more than one raid by pinning them beneath my voluminous skirts, and the socks I had knitted on many an evening when the gleaming needles were all the company I could boast. I laid them on my low flag chair and slipped down upon the rug before them to smooth them and fold them once more. As I did so with loving touch, I heard in the hall the sound of a step which sent my heart into my throat. I sat motionless, breathless, as the step came nearer to the door; a hand fumbled with the latchstring; the door was opened. I sprang to my feet and ran to meet Robert; there behind him stood all the grinning household.

"We done brought you a Chris'mas gif'," cried Dick.

"Oh," I cried delightedly; "did you know, Mammy?"

"'Fo' Gawd, I did n't. Dey 'd nebbah 'a' done it ef I had. 'T was 'Zekiel an' dat boy what fixed up dis hash. I thought Miss Nancy would 'a' had mo' sense."

"I 'm all right," cried Robert, as he sank into his own big chair. "How good it is to be here!"

His face was deeply flushed; it was from excitement, of course, I told myself. I was a goose for noticing it. "When did you plan this?" I asked joyfully. "Did you know you were going to do it when you bade me good-by to-day? Oh!" to his "yes," "it was mean to let me think —"

But they all laughed at me then, Robert with the rest. I slipped back to my seat on the rug. "Here are your Christmas presents, sir; since you have come in and found them all spread out, you can have them now." Laughing, I gave him the history of each gift, but I watched him keenly. I feared he had overtaxed himself, and when the red on his cheek grew deeper, instead of fading with

the waning of his excitement, when I slipped my hand over his where it lay on the wide arm of his chair and felt it hot and dry, I knew that mischief was afoot.

The evening was well past then. I made some pretence of outside duties, and got out of the room to Mammy's cabin. "Mammy, Robert is worse; he has a fever!" I cried before my foot was over the doorsill.

"Hush!"—in dismay.

"What are we going to do?"

"Maybe he 's jes tiahed; he 'll be all right by mornin'."

I shook my head. I believed worse was in store than her hopefulness suggested. "Not a drop of medicine in the house, not a doctor to be had," I murmured.

"Is you got any quinine?"

"Not a grain." We were a healthy family, and the small store of remedies we had had when such things were to be bought was exhausted long ago.

"I s'pose if we nussed him through once, we can do it again," declared Mammy, belligerently.

"Must we send for Miss Nancy?"

"Guess I knows nigh 'bout as much as she does. Is he got much fever? Dick, set dat kettle on to bile! 'Zekiel, go fotch me de mortar an' de pestle. Dyar 's some mustard seed hyar, Miss Lucy. A good hot baf, an' a plaster — dat 's de thing. 'T ain't much in folks you cyarnt wuk out in a good sweat; yas 'm, dat 's de thing."

Mammy reached up to the rafters for a bunch of the long slender seed-pods. "I 'll jes poun' 'em an' fix 'em an' put his feet in a hot baf, an' in de mornin' we 'll see."

But we saw how ill he was long before that. Mammy was scared to ashy whiteness when we went in and found him already talking at random. We got him upstairs and to bed, the low room under the eaves was more comfortable than the chamber with its shattered windows; still the stream of talk flowed on.

He babbled of camp, its wants, its hardships — things he had sedulously kept from us; he told how he had longed for home, for me. Dignified Robert had the tongue of a gossip as we tended him.

He flung shoulders and arms out of the covers when we had tucked him in. "You need n't coddle me," he laughed while the glitter of delirium shone in his eyes. "I 'm tough! Bed! pillows! quilts! Pshaw! I 've slept many a night in a corn-furrow and waked to find the water nearly over me when it had rained while I slept, and I did n't even know it, and I have gotten up soaked, no breakfast, not a morsel, and marched all day. Do you know, Lucy, what was the best thing I ever tasted, none of your hams ever equalled it. We were on the march; I had had nothing to eat for three days but green corn, when we camped one night near a farm-house. I wandered off, like many another soldier, to look for something to eat. The people there, in the house I mean, would n't give us a thing; said they had nothing for themselves. I went around to the kitchen window, — " he began to laugh, — "the cook had just poured some hot fat bacon and gravy into a dish. How good it smelled! I never said a word. I just reached through that window and took up

that dish and drank every drop of gravy, — yes, *drank* it; the bacon I grabbed up in my hands. I never did taste anything so good, not even your Christmas doings. It 's Christmas now, is n't it? where am I?" He tried to sit up in bed. "Oh, yes, home, home; yes, I know; it 's time the wheat was planted and the cornfield ploughed. 'Zekiel will have done it; oh, yes. I can trust him. He is the good farmer, not I. I never was good for anything much. And Lucy will take care of everything. When I go some day —" the talking broke, trailed off to indistinct mutterings.

He rambled on pitifully, mercilessly. Every inmost feeling of his heart, hidden and guarded with dignity, was laid bare. Mammy's tears ran down her face as she listened, but my eyes were hot and dry. By and by he fell into a heavy sleep; his stertorous breathing echoed through the attic. The stars paled, the dawn of Christmas broke. I gave the day no heed, nor the night nor day which followed it. Daylight

and candle-light came and went again; and then our household went hushed.

I shut every one of them out of the room. I alone would nurse Robert and share his danger. My meals could be brought to the head of the stairs, water and wood could be left there; further none should come. There was no danger from the outside. I knew well enough that far away and lonely as we lived, it would be bruited abroad that Robert was at home. I waited, a fierce, resentful joy at my heart when I thought of it, till they should send, as I knew they would, to capture him. I trusted there would be no one to interrupt them, no one about the place seeing them before I should, who would stay what I should do and say when that day came.

It fell out as I wished. Dick and 'Zekiel were hauling wood, Mammy was at the barn, when I heard the clatter of the gate and knew what it was. Robert was asleep; I prayed he should sleep on as I latched the door behind me and stole softly down the stair.

The leader of the little squad of soldiers was already dismounted, the six men with him were half-way out of their saddles. At sight of me at the foot of the stairs, he strode up the path, into the hall.

"We have heard that Robert Aylett is here; he lives here?"

"Yes." My tone was low, my manner calm and gracious.

"He is here?"

"Yes," with still the same demeanor.

The leader turned, and made a gesture; I saw the men surrounding the house.

"Where is he?" shortly.

"He is ill."

"So we have heard," — as if he knew how much credence to give such a report and was not to be fooled.

"No one has seen him for three days besides myself."

"You expect me to believe that?"

"He is too ill to be in any way disturbed."

"Disturbed?" sarcastically, "we will not disturb him. Where is he?"

I made a backward movement of my head.

"Up there."

"Stand aside!"

I put my hand across the narrow space between me and the other wall, so guarding the way. "You go at your own peril," I warned him sternly.

"Then he is not ill. Stand aside."

"At your own peril," I repeated with an added seriousness. It was all turning out just as I had in fancy seen it, but my imagination had gone no further than this. I had not thought what next I should have said or done had the responsibility been mine, for some demon seemed to possess me. He raised his hand to brush mine aside. I stepped down from the last stair on which I stood, courtesying as if I had been his partner in a play; the way was open.

But before he could mount a step, Maria came running, panting along the path. "Man!" she halloaed. "Man!" The soldier turned as she paused for breath.

"Don't you go make a fool of yo'se'f. Marse Robert 's got de small-pox!"

XXII

I SAT down on the stair and watched them racing down the lane. Poor fellows! Small-pox was the dreaded scourge of their camps and ours alike. Had I told the officer when he entered that such was the sickness I nursed, he would not have believed me; as it was he knew the truth, and we would go long untroubled. Of that I was certain. Dire as was the disease it would yet make a guard about us. I went with lightened heart up to the attic room; we were shut in to our trouble, but we were shut out from danger.

The days sped by; I let no one come near me; even with Mammy I held counsel across safe distances.

"Is he done broke out good?" she inquired anxiously for several mornings after the eruption had bespoken the disease. "Is he done broke out good?"

"Yes," I answered doubtfully. Robert was not covered from head to foot, as I had feared he would be.

"Is he got 'em thick?"

"His chest is covered and about his wrists and the edges of his hair."

"La! de small-pox ought to kiver him till you could n't put a pin p'int down on de nat'ral skin."

I shuddered.

"Deed it ought, honey; ef it don't come out on his outsides it 's gwine to come out on his insides, an' den —" the fearful roll of her eyes intimated what might be expected to follow. "You 'll hab to give him sumpin' to bring it out."

"What?" Robert was resting more easily and naturally than he had done since he was taken ill. I hated the idea of dosing him with hot drinks. "What would you give him?"

Mammy hesitated. "Well, I can make a tea o' sassafras roots or cherry-bark or foddah; dey 's all good in dyar tuhn. But seein' as dis is a sort o' skin disease lak," doubt-

fully, "you mought call it kind o' blood trouble. I spec' it had bes' be sassafras."

"Have you got the bark?" I asked, fearing it must be done.

"No 'm. I 'll jes' go straight out to de woods an' git it."

"Just so that you have it ready by night," I hesitatingly assented.

"Dat 's de bes' time."

But teas had no effect on Robert. The eruption was slight compared to the high fever which preceded it. By and by Mammy had another trouble.

"Honey," she would ask, her forehead deeply wrinkled, "how does you feel today?"

"Fine!" I would answer emphatically.

"I hearn you laughin' dis mornin' clean down at de kitchen," she accused one day, speaking as if she had hardly been able to believe the evidence of her own ears.

"Yes, indeed!" I took off my bonnet and swung it by its strings, letting the morning air, cold as it was, blow about my

head. "Mammy, Robert is better!" I announced it jubilantly.

"I s'pose so, honey; I s'pose so." But the note of anxiety was still there.

"He is going to get up to-morrow."

"Ain't you fear'd; 'deed you 'd bettah be keerful."

"I can't keep him in bed a day longer. Tell Dick to pile up the passage with wood."

"Ain't you got ernuff? Dat lazy boy —"

"Oh, plenty! But I want lots for to-morrow."

"Don't you want to take a walk erroun'? Marse Robert won't miss you; you say he is so much bettah."

"And have you all running out of my way? No, I thank you."

"You knows ef we runs 't is 'cause you done tol' us to."

"Mammy, what am I going to do for a dress?" I asked suddenly. "You know this one will have to be burned."

"Miss Nancy sent me word she got yo' dress nearly done. I done dyed de thread —

yes, indeed, long ergo; an' she done wove it, an' now she 's makin' of it."

"Tell her to have it ready in a week," I laughed.

But instead of answering, Mammy went back to her old plaint. "Honey, how does you feel?"

"How do you feel yourself?"

"'Zekiel 's got de rheumatiz wuss dan he ebbah had it befo'!"

"How about you?"

"Nuthin' don't ebbah mattah long me," with a toss of her head.

"Nor me!"

She made an exclamation under her breath, and I determined to have it out, then and there. "Look here, Mammy," I said, so quickly that she started. "I know what you are beating around, and you might just as well stop it. You are scared to death with thinking I am going to catch the small-pox. Don't you worry yourself; I am not going to have it. Freckles are about the worst in that line I shall have to endure," I added saucily.

"Gawd-a-mighty! don't make fun 'bout

nuthin' lak dat." Mammy turned away with a groan, as she had done many a time when I had been an unmanageable child past her understanding. It was a sort of "You 's past me, you got to fight it out wid yo'se'f" adjuration, but it did not dampen my spirits. I wanted to sing like the wren that perched on the garden gate and swelled its tiny throat with the ripple of its melody. I wanted to tramp abroad, to feel the heavy soil cling to my heel, to smell the clear, cold air blowing beneath the pines while the dry needles slipped under my foot; to loiter on the sunny side of some far-off fodder stack, the smell of it in my nostrils, the sun streaming over me, and when I threw back my head against the rough rustling leaves to look straight into the blue, to watch some small cloud drifting to unknown and unnamed harborage, to hear the crows call across empty fields — but it was yet too soon! I must go back to the little room with its sloping roof and low mantel-shelf and slits of windows peeping skyward. Prison it might be, but that prison held

my husband. The unspeakable delight of those long days when we talked ourselves back to the intimacy when the mind of one was an open page to the other! The winter hours drifted by unheeded, save for light and shadow or star-gleams through the small panes.

By the end of the month Robert was downstairs. It was high time he was. 'Zekiel had taken to his bed. My hands were fuller than they had been when nursing was my single care. Robert declared he never saw anything more of me than the flitting of my brown homespun dress about the yard, and he said it a trifle fretfully.

"You are spoiled, sir," I retorted. "Do you expect me to stay by your side all day long? You have had your coddling."

"Where are you going now?" I had stopped for but a moment by his side.

"Out to the barn."

"Sit down and rest."

"I am not tired. I am worn-out with staying in the house," I declared, with a toss of my head.

"So am I; I am going, too."

"You must not." I put my hands on his shoulders and pressed him down again into his chair. "It's cold and raw; we are going to have a storm before morning. Dick and I are trotting around to see if everything is all right. It's such fun!"

Robert slipped his hand over mine, where it lay on his shoulder, and drew it to his cheek, kissed it. I felt a tremble of his lips which touched my fingers, but I made no sign of knowing it.

Brave it as I might, I was tired then, and when I came back I was exhausted. I sat down and leaned back in my chair, too wearied to rub the mud from the heavy brogans I wore. Robert was walking up and down the room.

"I am not going to stay here shut up and see you do this," he declared, a blaze of anger in his brown eyes.

"What will you do, then?" I asked, with a weak pretence at airiness.

"I am going out, — out-of-doors!"

A howl of wind tore at the paper pasted

against the window; the rain and snow came spitting along the floor.

"Beautiful weather for it," I declared, as I jumped up to reach for something to stuff in the hole and keep out the storm.

Robert groaned. He leaned against the mantel-piece watching me. His face was flushed, his manner hesitant, when I came back to my chair.

"Lucy," he began, "you had corn-bread for breakfast and for supper, and —"

"We shall have it for breakfast and dinner and supper again," I declared glibly.

This want was all that I had kept from him; it was so unbelievable to need food.

"Is that all you have?"

"We are lucky, sir, to have that. We can't starve."

"My God!" It was all he said, but the tone of it!

"What does it matter?" I cried, saying in my excitement exactly what I thought. "If we can only find something for *you* to eat!"

"Me!"

"I look as if I were suffering, don't I?"

I stood out boldly in the firelight, challenging his scrutiny. His lips curved into a smile despite himself.

"You look — No, I will not tell you."

"You are afraid of feeding my vanity. Well, the springtime will soon be here," I added, thinking of our pressing wants. "This is the first of February."

"Yes." Robert turned to finger his pipe. "I must be gone by the fifteenth."

I had known it all along. It was I who had written to the captain of his regiment of his wound and of his illness, and had sent the letters over to the next county where a soldier, home on furlough, could carry it with him when he returned. It was I who had received the answer. But now I dared not look at Robert's eyes.

That stormy day was the last when I held Robert in check. As soon as the sun shone and the ground dried, he slipped my leash. Weak as he was, pitiably thin as he looked, with the cruel pock-marks showing blue against his fair skin, he would listen to no word of caution. Unploughed fields and

broken fences and desolation fairly maddened him. A very itching for work possessed his weak fingers.

While he still had strength for nothing but commands he leaned against the garden palings and made Dick plough the squares of earth between the borders, I hovering near with much the manner the "yaller" hen showed over the lone chick she had prematurely hatched. Then he must try jobs of carpentry. Can I forget that day when, worn with my own weariness and doubly so from watching his white face, where the perspiration, bred of exhaustion, stood thick upon his forehead despite the shrewish wind, my fingers trembled on the board which I held in place for his nailing and, stooping, he kissed them without a word, without looking up? It was well that he did not. On some of those days my mood was happy, on some wayward and bitter; that day the blackness was thick — that kiss dispelled it.

He straightened himself; the day's task was done. When he began the work of the next I protested with all my might. The

sky was cloudy or clear by fitful starts, the wind bitterly cold. "You are not going out this morning?" I begged, as he wandered restlessly to the door.

Instead of answering my question he asked another. "You are going down to see Miss Nancy?"

"I had intended to, but it is too cold for you."

"For me? You might as well stop coddling me."

"Then you want to go?" The fireside was most alluring on that sharp morning.

"No." Then after a pause, "Don't wait for me."

"It 's you she wants to see." I pretended a pout of jealousy.

"I can't go," decisively.

"Neither will I, then. You are not going out? Wait! Here, sir!" as I ran back with his worn but warm army coat, "you are to wear this. There!" I fastened the topmost tarnished button, tiptoed to pinch his cheek, and ran backwards from him down the path. He caught me at the gate, and

there I saw what he had been trying to keep me from knowing — Dick was coming along by the garden, driving a horse which was hitched to the plough.

"I thought Dick was going to The Ordinary," I exclaimed.

"He is."

"Who is going to plough?"

"I," calmly.

"You are not," I vowed hotly.

"You see that land; it should have been cultivated last fall."

"There was no one to do it."

"Who is going to do it now?"

I sighed. Corn must be planted there if we were to have bread for the next year. "Oh, somebody," I said lamely.

Robert pretended no argument. The need was too evident. 'Zekiel's rheumatism had grown worse; there was not a hand to be hired. Robert picked up the reins, slipped them around his shoulders, and put his hands, white and thin, on the plough handles; he trailed the share near to the border of the lane and began running a fur-

row by its side straight down toward the pines. The steel cut through the rich brown soil; the smell of fresh-turned earth was in the air.

The horse settled to his work; Robert held the plough steady; I tramped by his side. We had no fear of any stranger coming through the vista ahead of us. Even our neighbors kept away. We were as secure as if peace, and peace alone, brooded over our country.

But the clouds grew thicker as the morning lengthened, the winds chillier and stronger; Robert stopped at the end of a furrow near the house.

"Are you cold?" he asked.

"No!" My homespun dress, brogan shoes, and heavy shawl kept me warm and comfortable.

"I am. Wait here a moment."

I was leaning against the plough, my back toward the house, when he came out. He was quite close to me before I turned and saw him. I shrieked with laughter. Father's heavy gray shawl was pinned

around him above his army coat; a bright woollen comfort of mine was tied around his head and crossed under his chin, the fringed ends of it hanging down behind; and planted firmly upon it was his big soft hat. The pock-marks at the edge of his hair showed blue and vivid in the cold. It was that and his look of weakness which stilled my laughter, and kept me watching him as we tramped up and down, up and down. By and by he pulled the horse to a stand-still.

"There is a spring about here somewhere," he said. "I am thirsty."

"It is over there under the hill, near the path. Go on and find it. I will wait for you."

A stream cut across the field close by, running a rippling, dividing line between it and the curving woods; and bush and bramble on its banks made a thicket, dry and sheltering. I huddled down in the dry leaves, the thick, small branches making a brake between me and the wind, and waited, listening to the sighing of the pines and the gurgling stream. I could watch Robert as

he went along the path which led up the hill and through the woods to The Ordinary. The spring gushed from the hill hard by the path and fed with trickling rills the broader stream whose pools and clear shallows were behind me. Robert knelt by the sparkling water, and as he did so Dick came singing and skipping along the path homeward.

Robert raised his head. At that instant Dick, who had heard no sound and knew of no one being near, espied him. The boy threw his arms above his head, raised one hoarse scream, and sprang across the stream.

"De debbil, de debbil!" he shrieked. "Ise done seed de debbil."

"Dick, you goose!" I shouted, but he never heard. I jumped up and ran after him. "Dick, Dick!" I called, though I could scarcely run or call from laughter; but I heard only his sob, "De debbil! Ise done seed de debbil!"

I gave up the chase and went back to Robert. When we had had our laugh out,

we concluded to follow Dick. Robert had sent him to The Ordinary for news.

As soon as the horse was taken out, I started for the kitchen. "Where is Dick?" I called in at the door.

"In de cabin wid 'Zekiel."

"What 's the matter with him?"

"Lawd only knows! He 's skeered plumb out o' his wits."

"What scared him?" I insisted.

"He 'low as how he done see de debbil an' he done come fer him." Mammy came out to the door to answer me. "Some foolishness; done seed sumpin' down in de woods."

I pointed a shaking finger at Robert coming around the chimney corner. Mammy gave one roll of her eyes at him and plunged back into the kitchen. A smothered voice from a dark corner called, "Marse Robert, dat boy had a note fer you; he 'low as how he lost it when — down by de spring."

Tired as we were, Robert and I set out to search for it; it was our just punishment. Blown along with the sodden and drifted

leaves, down under a bramble tangle along the gurgling stream, we found a bit of white paper folded tightly. It contained but a few words penned by a conscript officer, but it shut the gate on all our careless joy. To obey the command it held meant that Robert must leave me at sunrise to-morrow morning, — and he must obey.

XXIII

THE ploughing of the field was finished, but it was Dick and I who accomplished it. Mammy stormed and raved, cried furrows down her cheeks over me, but I went my determined way. 'Zekiel's illness developed into long, slow, rheumatic fever. With our blundering attempts at healing he had but to live through the pains and outlive them if he could.

The long, glorious days of sunshine went by; days of warm winds, of greening grass, of budding leaves, of shy, blooming flowers; and gray days of rain blowing in slant lines between us and the pines, of winds moaning as if they voiced the desolation which closed about us.

Had we been the only ones so afflicted, remote as we were, we should have known the touch of human kindness which would have eased our burden somewhat; but far

and near was want, heartache, despair. Our strait was better than that of some, for still there came news of Robert's safety and of father's. In this knowledge I lived.

I worked as I had seen a slave do, but without his strength, his ease of mind, his jest, his song: there was no singing on my lips. As day merged into day, as long twilights and early dawns bespoke the summer, I began to feel as if in all the void between the sky overhead and the earth underfoot, in all that magic space rimmed by the forest with our small house for centre, there lived but one soul — and that was I. For me the sun rose above the eastward pines and sent long shafts of golden light across my world; for me the glorious shine of clear crimson sky, of roseate clouds parting to show the evening star against the breadths of green when the world — my world — turned to its rest; for me the breath of winds, the purpling of the grasses, the roses' bloom. The blue sky overhead was God's outstretched hand, and beneath it I walked in awful calm and peace, holden beyond dreaming, strengthened

beyond thought. No one gainsaid me, word or deed; I think they all feared me.

When 'Zekiel hobbled at last out to his work, it was to follow my slightest words; Dick looked at me askance. Mammy's forehead and her cheeks were furrowed that year into lines no after-peace smoothed out.

The days went by. There were cornstalks shoulder high in the fields, the sibilant rustling of their leaves was on the wind, the pungent smell of them in the air; fresh, green things for eating grew in our garden, by and by the fodder was stacked, the corn hidden in the cabin in the woods; the green grass was carpeted by yellow leaves down-drifted from the cherry tree; the wild grasses were sered or purpled with seed-pods — and the day of which I had dared not think, the hour for which no tender preparation could be made, no aid invoked, and from which no power could save me, but which I — I alone — must meet and endure, had come.

It was an October night, but there was no balminess of Indian summer in the air;

instead a cold, raw wind came blowing from the east, sobbing in the chimneys, shaking against doors and windows. A fire burned on the chamber hearth and one in the dining-room; there our little world waited awe-stricken.

"Mammy," I asked, when the first agonizing thrill of pain set my nerves a-quiver, "will it be long?"

"Gawd only knows."

"Is it — is it very hard?" as another pain bent me in my chair before the fire.

"Gawd only knows," repeated the loving soul, stricken to the core by my suffering. "Lan', chile," as she gathered her courage, "sometimes 't ain't nuthin' 't all, 't ain't no mo' dan habin' a good ole-fashioned chill; an' den —"

"And then — and then!" Was it the gust that shrieked it? was it my own lips? Was that Mammy kneeling by my bedside, and 'Zekiel's restless feet tramping through the hall, and Dick's ashy face peering inside when Mammy called for wood? Was it the wind that moaned and moaned, or was it

voices in the house? Was it the writhings of the cherry tree, storm lashed, that thrilled me with fear, or was it the twistings of my own body lashed by pain? Did I hear a voice sob, "Pray, pray; fer Gawd's sake, pray! You cyarn't do nuthin' else."

I know I asked, when nerve and muscle were racked until it was unbelievable that they could stand more, "Am I dying?"

Faint as the whisper was, it carried to the black head bent above me. "Oh, Gawd! Oh, no, Miss Lucy, honey! No, chile, no! Try an' stan' it; it cyarn't be much longer."

"What time is it?" I whispered.

"I dunno, nigh to daybreak."

"Robert," my lips framed, "Robert—" There was a thought I tried to speak, but it would not come. I was benumbed to unconsciousness. Nor did it frame itself for long hours. I opened my eyes on sunshine streaming into the room, firelight gleaming on the bare floor, on haggard faces by my bedside.

CALLED TO THE FIELD

"Robert!" I framed the words at last, "what will he say when he sees our child?" But there had been two days and three nights between the first words of that sentence and the last.

XXIV

IT was that question, and that alone, which filled night and day. When my lips trembled into a smile, it was not the baby, red and round, who evoked it — it was the thought of what Robert would say to her. How would he touch her, hold her? How awkward he would be, how shy and embarrassed! In fancy I could see the flush rising up his fair face to the edges of his thick, waving hair, could see the sparkle of love and wonder growing in the depths of his dark eyes. How I longed for him! his strong touch for my languor, his cheery voice to brighten my indifference. For I had lingered long on the border land. The needle of life's compass dipped unsteadily; sometimes it pointed to life and sometimes to its opposite pole of death; it was Christmas-tide when it set its course at last lifewards.

The world, my little part of it, drifted by. I had no thought for any phase of it. Once

there was news from Robert; that was enough. I knew my great truth now — God's love around me, God's love around him; so we were kept, so we were together. I had fitted no theories, solved no scheme of the unseen; but this precious knowledge I held fast.

The baby grew wonderfully. Mammy, 'Zekiel, and Dick were forever peeping at her, hanging about her; but I felt no great, overwhelming, all-sweeping current of love toward her; she was but a joy unfolding, ready when I was strong enough. I was too weak for any great emotion except that one which was life itself — my love for Robert.

When I could creep about the room and sit in my low chair, I loved to have her in my arms or on my lap, though they would not let me hold her often. But one day, as I sat with her on my knee, her small body lax with sleep, her fingers stirring restlessly, a smile twitching at her soft mouth, I heard the sound of wheels, then voices, cries.

In my weakness I scarcely stirred to turn my head when the door opened, but I smiled,

for Emily stood there, and I had not seen her for a year.

She came to me quickly, knelt by my side, put her arms about me; and the tears were running down her cheeks.

I looked at her, and I was as still as the dead. My arms fell away from the baby on my knee, my lips were motionless; but my eyes questioned, and she answered, "Robert is dead."

XXV

"GOD's love!" In the consciousness of its truth, which I had wrested from reading, from prayer, from hours of fearful dreaming and realized agony — in that consciousness I lived. It was about me by day, the whisper of it was in the night watches, when I was restless, though the baby lay warm on my arm and the stars shone in through the patched window-panes. All the tender words for the broken-hearted breathed through me, and with the whispering of them in my heart, I would turn my head upon my pillow and fall at last asleep. I wakened with them on my lips. I took courage from them for strength and work. For there was work not only ahead but already at hand. I felt the need of garnering my strength for it. Life goes on for the broken-hearted as well as the joyous, and there is a duty for each. I must do

the work allotted one as I had known the rapture of the other.

I never asked about Robert's death; that it was true was enough to know. I heard that he had died on the battle-field, that Lady had been shot under him. They found the faithful beast, but Robert's body they did not find. The thought of it in some shallow trench pressed close by many comrades brought no sting beneath my eyelids. What did that matter?

Henry brought these details. His right arm had been shattered, amputated, and he had been mustered out. When he came to see me his empty sleeve was pinned across his breast. He had much to say, sad words of disaster and defeat, hopeless ones of worse yet to come. He told me of father, his enthusiasm, his courage, his inspiriting example.

And sharp on the heels of his visit came that last great raid made by Fitzpatrick through our country. When it swept on we had left to us housings and land — that was all.

We lived after that dreadful time as the birds of the air or the shy beasts of field and forest. We learned to be glad when the dandelion showed its leaves and the polk put up its stalks, when the blackberries ripened beside the stream or the whortle-berries purpled in the woods; we learned the significance of daily bread. Yet face to face with want we never more than faced it. It stood a grim phantom on the border line of each day, but the next day's dawn found it no nearer. There comes a keen, elated joy from the knowledge that in time of dire stress Our Father cares for our daily bread. So Elijah must have felt when he awaited the rustle of the raven's wings.

The blossom, the perfume of our existence, was the new life in our home. Upon the wreck and ruin of all we had known the baby grew, with ever a laugh, a dimpling cheek, and a sturdy will. The wonderful love of her crept into my cold heart. Never did I enter the room but her joyous smile greeted me; never did I slip into my chair but she crept into my lap and cuddled

against my shoulder. As soon as she learned the use of her soft, pink feet she would toddle by my side, holding to my hand or skirt with a sturdiness which defied all weather and a joyousness which defied all discomfort.

So she clung to me at the close of a cheerless November day when, basket in hand, I sought the woodpile. Candles we had none, and our store of pine knots was low; I went to search amongst chips and logs. The dusk of the short day brooded over fenceless yards and barren fields; the acrid smell of smoke blown low about the chimneys was in the air. The baby, when we reached the woodpile, set up a whimper and raised a bare, red foot.

"Ah!" I cried pityingly, "there's a splinter in that foot;" and I slipped down on a log, lifted her on my knee, and turned her tiny foot, cold and chapped, in my hands. "There's nothing here, dearie!" I rubbed the foot softly. "It must have been a chip that hurt you; that's all right, get down!" But she cuddled the closer.

I tied the bonnet under her chin, kissed her soft, warm mouth; and then I saw that her eyes were shy and affrighted, that they gazed past me. I looked around.

Blurred against the brown fields loomed a figure, awful in the dusk, gaunt, bent, haggard. I put the child down gently, stumbled to my feet. I gave a gasp — that ghostly, impalpable vision was alive. I clenched my hands and leaned forward; the hands of that wraith were lifted in passionate supplication. I shrieked aloud and the eerie sound of it rang over the desolate yard and the empty house.

"Stand back!" the wraith cried hoarsely; but it need not have cautioned. My feet were like lead, the blood beat and surged in my ears until I could have distinguished no word, heard nothing but that voice.

"Is it you?" I whispered. "*You*, ALIVE!"

"It is I." He passed his hands wearily across his face.

"You? *You?*" I still whispered. I had breath for nothing else. I moved toward him.

"Stand back!" He staggered from me. "Keep away! Send Maria here! There she is, thank God!" My shrill cry had brought her, running. He gathered his strength. "Maria!" he called.

"Marse Robert's ghos'! Marse Robert's ghos'!"

"My God!" he muttered brokenly. "Has n't she got any sense? Pull her up! No, run to the house! Get me something to eat. I am starving."

He said it to get me out of the way. When I came back there was no living soul there but the baby sitting still and scared where I had left her. The wood stacks towered black, the yard was empty; one light shone from Mammy's cabin. I rushed to it, but the door was barred; I threw myself with all my strength against it.

"Miss Lucy! Miss Lucy!" cried a voice, almost inarticulate from emotion. "Wait a minute, honey; jes wait a minute!" A low moan seconded her.

I leaned against the battened door, striving to hear every sound; I fairly fell inside when

Mammy opened it, but she caught me, held me, and fastened it behind her.

"Let me see him!" I pushed against her angrily.

"You cyarn't."

"I will."

She picked me up in her arms, carried me to the house, and sat me down with a thump on the step. "Now," she panted, "you stay hyar. Dis ain't no time fer foolishness."

"It 's Robert!" I cried hysterically.

"Ain't you got eyes? ain't you seed him yo'se'f?"

"He 's alive," I crooned.

"He jes is," Mammy snapped; "an' ef you don't show mo' sense, he 'll die right hyar on yo' han's."

"Mammy, how —"

"He 's been in prison, got out somehow, come trompin' his way home. Chile, run fer de uddahs, let 'em know. In de name o' sense is you done lef' dat baby at de woodpile?" as a cry came from the back of the yard.

"Miss Lucy," Mammy put her hands on

my shoulders, "he 's got to be washed, he 's got to hab his hyar an' his whiskers cut; an' ebery las' rag he 's got on will hab to be buhnt up. Go 'long, git dat baby an' call de res'."

At midnight I was crouched outside of the cabin. The tide of joy had swept into the hearts of all and filled them; all slept but me. I tapped lightly on the little window, and Mammy came to the door, opened it a crack, and peered out into the night.

"It 's me," I whispered, creeping close to her. "Let me come in just to look at him for one minute, one second."

Mammy closed the door behind her and crouched down on the step, her big body guarding the entrance.

"He 's asleep," she said shortly, "an' ain't nobody gwine 'sturb him."

The light from the little window shone on my face where I stood, my hand against the wall. Mammy looked at me long and earnestly. I could see the glow of her eyes in the dusk.

"No, you ain't gwine ter see him to-night." I choked back the catch in my breath. "Ef you was to stan' by his baid, ef you was to fly dyar an' hover over him an' look at him wid dem eyes, you 'd wake him. You 'd call his soul back ef 't was slippin' erway. 'T ain't no lovin' he wants now, 't is res', jes res'.

"I done fixed him up good," she went on after a while. "I done buhnt ebery las' rag o' his clothes an' I done got some ole ones Marse Willum give 'Zekiel all ready — I holt on to 'em spite o' all dis trapsin' an' goin' on. Go 'long to de house an' git some sleep. Ise gwine set by de fiah an' watch him all night long."

"Let me stay here, outside!"

"I 'clare to goodness I did think you 'd got some sense dese las' days. No longer dan dis ebenin' you thought he was daid, daid an' buried somewhars whar you 'd nebbah eben know de spot. An' now he 's hyar sleepin' peaceable, an' you a-standin' hyar cotchin' yo' death o' col'. Honey, you 's got a heap to lib fer. 'T is time you was beginnin' to tek cyar o' yo'se'f."

I had sense enough left to go back into the house, but not to bed. By dawn I was again at the cabin door, but Mammy had for my low step the same caution: "He 's asleep!"

So he lay through that day and night and into the next. Once or twice he had aroused and Mammy had put the hot milk she had ready to his lips; he drank eagerly and sank back again to slumber.

"'T is de very bes' thing fer him," she declared; "de Lawd done took Marse Robert in His han's, Marse Robert is a-restin' an' a-gettin' well at de same time. Praise de Lawd! Glory hallelujah!"

We went about in a trance of joy and expectancy. That night we slept the sound sleep of the rejoicing; the next day, as I sat in my room, the baby playing at my feet, the door was pushed softly open; Robert stood there.

His sunken, dark eyes flamed as they met mine; his gaze searched me from head to foot. I had had no consciousness of myself, but as he gazed I knew that my hair had

whitened at the temples, that my dress was worn to raggedness, my shoes to holes. The wave of consciousness swept away. I was aware of nothing but him. So for a breath's space we gazed at one another, then with a cry of joy I sprang toward him.

XXVI

THERE was little that Robert would ever tell of his prison life or his escape, and that little was in broken snatches; once only he spoke freely. Father was there that night, and Emily and Henry — they had been married as soon as he returned disabled. It was spring-tide again, and the winds, low and languid, stole through the hall where we sat — Emily and the men near the door, I on the step where I could watch the baby playing in the path. The jonquils bloomed on the border, the grass was yellow with dandelions, and from the distant swamp came the chorus of the frogs' hoarse croaking. When I turned I could see Mammy moving slowly and contentedly about the kitchen, 'Zekiel smoking his pipe at the cabin door, and Dick coming up from the pasture.

Father settled comfortably down into his chair and lighted his pipe. He had stayed

with the army to the last day of its bitter defeat, had come home unscathed, and with a will and vigor undiminished. "Well," he began, "they have settled the question for us, now let them look out. I can't say that I think it is the best way," sarcastically; "but it is done. The negroes are free, so am I. I can pick and hire my own hands now."

"Whom are you going to have?" Robert asked.

"Hm! I don't know that I have exactly decided." Father's face reddened at the admission and at the laughter which followed it; for we all knew that his very first care had been for the worst, the laziest, and the least likely to provide for themselves of those servants left.

The talk ran on like that of all eventful hours, — rapid sometimes, then short with long silences between. It veered to the battle in which Robert fell.

"I saw you fall; I thought you were shot," declared Henry.

"I thought so myself," Robert admitted, with a short laugh; "but it was Lady. Poor

horse! she had saved my life many a time before, and she saved it then. She plunged forward so suddenly that she carried me with her, and I fell crumpled up under her side. I broke my arm, and I suppose I fainted. When I came to, a man was pulling at my leg; thought I was dead, but wanted to make sure. He was good enough when he found out I was n't. Got a rag from somewhere, tied up my arm, and — and then I was a prisoner. I did n't have any too many clothes on, you remember how we had gotten?" to Henry, who nodded a reply. "I had an old brim of a hat left, and there were soles to my shoes — but little else." He laughed ruefully at the remembrance. "Well, they marched us down to the river, out on the wharf, and there they kept us waiting for ten hours — not a mouthful to eat, not a drop to drink. The sun scorched down on us, packed there like sardines, and on the sand and the water — and I was fair dead for a drop of it, sweet and fresh.

"The boat came at last to take us to Lookout, you know. They marched us on —" Robert's voice broke, I turned my face away.

" They marched us two by two up the gang-plank. The officer in charge and the captain were leaning over the railing. I never lifted my eyes as I fell into line and marched up the plank. I heard an oath ripped out, and then, 'My God, it 's Aylett!' I looked up. It was Marsden; I knew him in New York, you know.

" By the time I got inside he was there by the stairway and had me by the arm. I was half dead, but I had sense enough to go with him as he pulled me, and he was cursing a blue streak right along. But I knew mighty well when I had looked once at him — Well, I expect we all felt that way once or twice these last few years. He took me to his stateroom, locked the door. 'God! Aylett,' he said, 'what do you want?'

" I stumbled over to the water pitcher and drained it. I laughed as I sat down on the side of the bunk and thrust out my feet.

" 'Clothes?'

" 'Something to eat.'

" When he came back I was snoring. He shook me up, put the plate on my knees.

I ate, he questioned. Henry, what a good thing soap and water and towels are! He put them in place, tumbled out a suit of his own clothes, went out, and locked the door on me. It is a good thing there was no one on that boat who dared disobey him. I believe he would have fought if they had. And he did n't forget the other men, either; they had enough to eat for once.

"Well!" He came to the doorway, knocked the ashes from his pipe, looked down at me and at the baby playing in the path. "I lost those clothes soon enough."

They questioned him of his prison, but he answered shortly, "It was hell;" and that was all he would say till pressed for his escape.

"It will do no harm now," he admitted; "the man is safe at home. You will never know —" But the very thought of those prison days sealed his lips. He let slip no word of description as he had started to do. Instead, "I was sitting in front of my tent one day, stripped — took off my shirt to get rid of unpleasant visitors — I told you it was no nice tale."

"Go on," said Henry, shortly, and father leaned forward in his chair.

"It was hot enough — baking, steaming, killing hot. I was doing the best I could when the officer of the day turned the corner — and there I was. I looked queer, so did he; then he said kind of awkwardly, 'Go ahead! Go ahead! I like to see you try to keep clean.' I had to laugh, and I roared; so did he. That was just before I had the fever." I turned quickly; he had told me nothing of it. "Yes, I had the fever, and I could n't get well. The men sickened and died like flies around me. I would n't do either," grimly; "die or get well. I saw that officer watching me many a day. There was nothing he could do for me, but somehow — One day I was dragging my feet along out beyond the tents and I met him. There was no one within ten yards of us and the guard had his back turned. He stopped short. 'Aylett,' he asked, quick as a flash, 'is there anybody at home waiting for you?'

"'My wife.' I gazed steadily back at him,

right into his eyes. I knew something was coming, and it did, quick.

"'There is to be an exchange of prisoners to-morrow morning. You are not one of them, but I am going to call the roll. Hang around close, fall in as they march out; don't look at me, I will be ticking them off. Don't turn your head or speak a word, you will be shot if you're found out. It's risky, but — No, hush! I can't stand your face, man. I feel as if I were committing murder when I look at you. I want you out of sight.'

"I was there. I looked at him when I crowded close and fell into step; but he never lifted his eyes after one last rapid glance at us all. That is all."

"How did you get home?"

"The best way I could."

No one seemed to have anything to say after that. Father went off to talk to Maria, and Emily and Henry followed him. Robert came out to the step and put his hand on my head.

"I want to see your eyes," he declared whimsically.

"I am not crying," I declared.

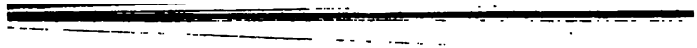
"Of course not," stoutly, "why should you?" But he sat down by me and pulled my head to his shoulder; the baby toddling up put a dimpled hand on his knee and his own closed over it.

"There is nothing to be sad for," he said bravely; "all my work is lost" — fenceless yard and uncultivated fields told him that — "and all my money would not buy a bushel of wheat, but — God! I am at home and you are here!"

"And the jonquils are abloom," sang my heart, "and the cherries reddening;" and by my side the trampled rose-vine straggled upwards, holding forth a rose.

And looking at Robert, the flush of health on his thin cheek, at the baby's rosy face against his knee, I knew there is one mirror of heaven on earth, and its setting is neither wealth nor fame — it is love.

THE BEST
BOOKS
COMPANIONS



By the Author of "Called to the Field"

A GIRL OF VIRGINIA

By LUCY MEACHAM THRUSTON. Illustrated.
12mo. $1.50

A delightful present-day romance, with its scenes located in the Old Dominion State. "One could scarcely find a more delightful heroine than the pretty daughter of a professor of the University of Virginia, Frances Holloway, who is the same lovable, high-spirited young woman one so often meets in real life, but for some reason or other so seldom in stories," says the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. "The best story of college life from the townspeople's point of view that has been written in a long time."

"Not too light nor yet too tragic — with a wholesome out-of-door flavor," says the *Boston Journal*, while the *New York Commercial Advertiser* says "the author has given us a picture of modern girlhood that goes straight to the heart and stays there."

By the same Author

MISTRESS BRENT

A Story of Lord Baltimore's Colony in 1638
Illustrated. 12mo. $1.50

The story is an interesting study of the life of the colonists, and has seldom been excelled as a picture of early Maryland's history. — *Baltimore News*.

No more able or remarkable woman figures in early colonial history. The author has splendid material at hand and uses it with commendable accuracy. — *The Outlook*, New York.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS
BOSTON, MASS.

By the Author of "Called to the Field"

WHERE THE TIDE COMES IN

By LUCY MEACHAM THRUSTON

Author of "Mistress Brent," "Where the Tide Comes In," "Called to the Field," etc.

Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth. $1.50.

A novel with a fine Southern atmosphere.—*Book News*, Philadelphia.

Mrs. Thruston gave her readers a charming portrayal of individual femininity of the Southern type in "A Girl of Virginia," but that girl at her best was no possible match for Page Nottoway, the captivating heroine of "Where the Tide Comes In."—*Baltimore Herald.*

A novel of dramatic force, with a good plot, characters which are distinct and consistent throughout in the drawing, and a setting which is original and effective. The heroine, Page Nottoway, is a typical American girl.—*New York Times.*

The heroine, Page, is dainty, sweet, proud, and everything else that goes with the scenery. The novel is well entitled to a place among those tales of contemporary life which possess value because of the author's actual knowledge. —*Chicago Tribune.*

Written in a style whose quality is far superior to that of either "A Girl of Virginia" or "Mistress Brent." . . . The local color is remarkably good. —*Baltimore Sun.*

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

254 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON

A New Novel by the Author of "Quo Vadis"

ON THE FIELD OF GLORY

By HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

Author of "Knights of the Cross," "With Fire and Sword," "The Deluge," "Quo Vadis," etc.

Translated from the Polish by Jeremiah Curtin

12mo. Decorated Cloth, $1.50

This important work is the only one written by this renowned author since the year 1900, when he completed "Knights of the Cross." The scenes are laid in Poland, and the period is the reign of the famous King John Sobieski, just before the Turkish invasion in 1682 to 1683. Sienkiewicz has woven a wonderful romance of great brilliancy and strong character drawing, and in no book by the author of "Quo Vadis" has he displayed his great genius more strikingly.

He tells a charming, tender, and passionate love-story of remarkable intensity, and gives the reader acquaintance with characters not inferior in vigor and interest to those of the great trilogy. The complete work has been translated by Jeremiah Curtin.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

254 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON

A Distinctive Modern Romance

MAID OF ATHENS

By LAFAYETTE McLAWS

Author of "When the Land Was Young," etc.

12mo. Decorated Cloth, $1.50

A romance of great charm dealing with Lord Byron's career in Greece, his poems "Thyrza" and "Maid of Athens" furnishing the talented novelist with the germ of a love-story which will appeal to many besides those interested in the poet's romantic life. The scenes on the Bosphorus and in the Imperial harem at Stamboul, the attempted rising of the Greeks against the Turks, and Lord Byron's love for the "Maid of Athens," are pictured with great vividness and power, and Thyrza, the daughter of a Greek patriot, is one of the most lovable creations of modern romantic fiction.

Readers of "When the Land Was Young" need not be told that Miss McLaws is gifted with a wealth of creative imagination. Her new book is laden with the atmosphere of the early nineteenth century, and it is a living, breathing woman whose love and sorrows thrill us in this story. Byron himself, though vividly present in these pages, is second in interest to the lovely Greek girl Thyrza, who is depicted with a sympathetic touch due perhaps to the author's Southern birth and temperament.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

254 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON